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"SAIL, HO!" SHOUTED JACK LANG ALOFT. "BY JOVE! I HOPE IT'S THE FRIGATE!" EXCLAIMED THE LIEUTENANT.

JACK LANG,
THE PRIVATEER ROVER;
OR,
THE MAN OF MANY NAMES.

A Romance of the Frigate "United States" First Cruise.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN,

AUTHOR OF "MIDSHIPMAN DARE," "TWO MIDSHIPMEN," "THE THREE LIEUTENANTS," "THE FOUR COMMANDERS," "FIGHTING JACK SHUBRICK," "DARING DICK COOPER," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE "HELL AFOAT."

1812—off the capes of Delaware.

Running close together are a fine frigate flying the American flag, and a low-lying, beautifully modeled lugger—a type of craft rarely seen in these waters.

"Lugger, ahoy!" hails the first lieutenant of the frigate.

"Ahoy-oy!" comes the long-drawn response, followed by:

"What d'ye want?"

It was a pygmy on his dignity, so to speak, and the lieutenant smiled as he answered:

"Your name and country! Where's your flag?"

"You might know we wor Americans, or we'd've run away from ye—an' that wouldn't be much trouble!" replied the helmsman of the lugger—the only person visible on that craft.

"Our flag's the American flag!" he continued. "We'll have it aloft as soor as the quartermaster finds it—confound him!"

The vessels were so close together that every word was plainly heard on board the frigate, and the disgusted tone in which the last sentence was uttered, caused a roar of laughter which no discipline could restrain. Even the usually grave first lieutenant, the man upon whose shoulders rest all the worries of a war-ship, could not refrain from smiling as he demanded:

"What name?"

"Hell Afloat!"

"What?"

There was as much exclamation as interrogation in the monosyllable, but the same answer was returned.

"Bid him heave-to, and have the commander come on board with his papers!" ordered the captain, becoming irritated and suspicious.

Never doubting that there would be anything except instant obedience to the order, he turned toward the cabin, but was brought to a standstill by the reply from the lugger:

"If ye want t' see our papers, ye've got t' come 'n' look at 'em! We'll wait for yer boat—if you'll hurry a bit!"

Amusement as well as amazement was pictured on every face aboard the frigate, except the captain's and first lieutenant's. With the former, astonishment quickly gave way to anger, and springing into the mizzen rigging, he shouted:

"Heave to instantly! If your captain isn't on board here within five minutes, I'll board you—to your sorrow!"

"Come right along—that's what I'm tellin' ye—but for the Lord's sake, don't be so long-winded about it!" coolly returned the man at the helm of the lugger.

"Do you intend to heave to?" thundered the captain, and to the lieutenant:

"Run out a gun there on the forecastle, Mr. Allen!"

"No use, capt'in—ye couldn't do more than smash our topmasts and they're bare already," declared him of the lugger, adding:

"I'd really like t' oblige ye by heaving to, but it can't be done—seein' as how I can't risk leavin' the wheel, an' the crew's down in the forehold."

The captain uttered an emphatic expression (not at all polite, though it relieved his feelings), and gazed inquiringly at the first lieutenant.

"It's really true—he is the only man visible, and it's also true that the craft's so low, and so close under our bows, that we cannot reach her," answered the lieutenant.

At that moment a young man appeared on the deck of the lugger, and after exchanging a few words with the man at the wheel, made an angry motion with his hand, accompanied by an impatient stamp of the foot.

In response to the plainly-seen angry gestures of the youth, the steersman put up the helm, while the former let run the mainsail, leaving the craft under nothing but her jib, and a bit of the mizzen.

"Ha! That lad's evidently in authority," began the captain, his anger subsiding at this evident sign of submission, but stopped short with an angry oath.

The cause of the captain's wrath, was the appearance on the deck of the lugger of a large dog, dragging an American flag toward the man at the wheel.

"Aho-oy the frigate!" hailed the youth, from the stern of the lugger.

"Send a boat—we have none!" he continued, when his call had been answered.

"Sure enough!" muttered the lieutenant, and glancing inquiringly at the captain, remarked:

"That fellow could haul the maintop in a hurricane without a trumpet. He's got a voice like a fog-horn."

"He has," assented the captain, and with a grim smile, continued:

"Clear away the first cutter, and, when you get aboard that craft, let me hear what kind of a voice that dog has—hang him! I'll teach his owner that that flag isn't to be used as a swab, or a plaything in the mouth of a brute!"

The lieutenant bowed, and turned away to give the necessary orders to shorten sail, and clear away the cutter. He knew his captain well to remonstrate then—though the flag referred to was at that moment ascending to the mast-head of the lugger.

The frigate was now hove to; the cutter lowered, and with the lieutenant in command, was pulled quickly to the lugger.

"You wish to see our papers, I believe?" queried the youth, as the officer stepped on board.

"And your commander," amended the lieutenant, glancing at the dog, standing beside the man at the wheel.

"I am all the commander you can see, and as for papers, I fear they will prove even less satisfactory," returned the youth, adding:

"The late commander of this craft without doubt, had a commission, but I have been unable to find one. However, if you will come to the cabin, I will place what papers there are before you."

He was moving toward the cabin as he finished, but the lieutenant stopped him with:

"Hold on! What do you mean by the 'late commander of this craft?' And where is your crew?"

"The captain was taken ashore by the crew at an uninhabited island in the Bahamas—to be hanged. It was done without delay, I've no doubt, for they hated him, but we slipped our cable before they got back, and managed to work our way as far as this."

"A strange story," dryly commented the lieutenant. "Why did you leave them?"

"Because they intended to turn privateering into piracy—hoist the black flag whenever it could be done with safety."

"To which you objected!"

"Most strenuously, though uselessly. What can one or two do against the will of one hundred?" quickly retorted the youth, apparently not liking the tone of the question.

"You appear to have done pretty well, since you managed to get possession of the vessel," returned the lieutenant.

"Why did they spare you, who objected so strongly to piracy—and this man at the wheel? And how came they to intrust you with the vessel?"

The youth flushed angrily, and drawing himself up haughtily, hotly replied:

"First, sir, because I was the only officer left who could navigate the vessel, and, secondly, because I was, until that day, confined to my berth with a sprained ankle, and knew nothing of what was going on until they were about to take the captain ashore."

"A' as f'r yer 'umble servent, sir, why they know'd I didn't care a button what they did, but as long as he said 'twarn't no go, I wouldn't j'ine 'em," added the man who had been at the helm, and who had approached the others unnoticed.

Glancing curiously from the speaker to the youth, the lieutenant asked:

"You say you were the only officer—what rank did you hold?"

"Third lieutenant. The second headed the mutiny, but was raised to that rank only because of his bravery—for he was very ignorant—while the first was shot for attempting to help the captain."

"Which same was a thing the men were

mighty sorry for," put in the seaman, as the youth ceased.

"Why?"

"Because it gave him an easy death, sir!"

"Phe-ew! Well, you may get what papers you have and accompany me," directed the lieutenant, addressing the youth, and then, as his gaze rested on the dog, which had followed the seaman, continued:

"And while you are collecting them we will hang this dog."

"Do what?" cried the youth.

"I guess not!" exclaimed the seaman, while the dog (as if understanding what was being said) uttered a deep, growling protest.

CHAPTER II.

A DESPERATE DEFIANCE.

"I SAID we would hang tuat dog!"

Irritated by the seaman's blunt declaration to the contrary, Allen repeated the words in a tone which proved how little objection (from a mere privateersman) would be tolerated.

"Hang Quartermaster! What for, sir?" demanded the young lieutenant.

"Because Captain Decatur, of the frigate United States, directs it!" was the still sharper reply.

"I have no desire to play hangman to either man or beast—or to have any connection with such an affair," continued Allen, in a milder tone, "but, unless you can furnish me a plausible excuse, it must be done before I return. Our captain saw your dog dragging the flag along the deck, and unreasonable as you think it, has ordered that he be hanged."

"Oh, that's easy enough!" answered the sailor. "Ye kin just tell him, 'twas only obeyin' his own orders. He wanted t' see our flag, an' I sent Quartermaster for it."

"Ah, I see! The dog is the quartermaster you referred to when we hailed you."

"Here, coxswain! Take this to the captain!" and scribbling a few lines on a card, Allen dispatched the cutter to the frigate.

"I rather think the idea of a dog acting as quartermaster will tickle the captain's fancy," he continued, as the boat shot away.

"Whether or not, I can assure you that the dog will not be hanged!" declared the young lieutenant, peremptorily.

A grim smile played around Allen's mouth. The audacity—the impudence—of the other's words was amusing, but only for the moment. Then, ironically polite, he warned:

"You might possibly prevent the hanging, by shooting your quartermaster, at once, but you will be apt to receive a rough reception when you are brought on board, for doing it."

"I will not be brought on board, sir."

This was too much for Allen, who—impetuous in his way as his commander—sharply replied:

"You will do as you are told, young man!"

The "young man"—he was about twenty-two—and the seaman exchanged glances, and the latter lounged forward, followed by the dog.

The naval officer had observed the significant interchange of looks, but, confident in his power, attached no importance to the matter—even on seeing the seaman disappear below. Already the cutter was returning, and from the hurried manner in which it left the frigate, Allen guessed the nature of the order it was bearing, and remarked:

"Your companion may as well save trouble by bringing that dog back, for from appearances, the order still is: Hang the dog!"

"With all due respect to your guns, sir, I repeat, the dog will not be hanged, and that boat's crew must not attempt to board this craft," quietly returned the other.

"What do you mean?"

The tone of the question was contemptuous—as much so as the regard the speaker had for any personal danger threatening him, but though the young privateersman wore a pair of pistols, he made no sign of using them, and his voice and manner were perfectly cool as, with his eyes fixed on the cutter, he answered:

"Any attempt to board this craft, sir, will be the signal for its destruction, and that of all on board!"

"The lugger is a floating mine. We made it so to prevent its recapture by the pirates, or capture by the English—not expecting it would be necessary to protect ourselves against our countrymen."

"Stop that boat! Another fathom, and I'll give the signal to fire the magazine!"

There was no mistaking the speaker's earnestness. One glance at his resolute face convinced Allen that further delay in stopping the cutter would cause the discharge of the pistol, which

the privateersman had drawn with the last warning word, and which evidently was to be the signal.

"C'n't find it! They're a pair of madmen!" he muttered, and with a gesture to the coxswain of the cutter, prevented that worthy from attempting to come aboard, while asking:

"What are the orders, Martin?"

"Hang the dog, sir, and bring the man in command on board the frigate—at once!"

Allen looked angry and perplexed. The privateersman had sprung away from him when drawing the pistol, and now stood safe beyond reach, awaiting his decision with a calmness, too evidently genuinely desperate to be doubted.

"And the other fellow looked fully capable of doing, what this one threatens," thought the perplexed officer, who could see the captain watching him from the frigate's quarter-deck—full of wrath without doubt, over the delay in executing his orders.

"See here, sir!" called the young privateersman, while the other stood hesitating, "I don't wish to cause you any unnecessary trouble, but we have brought this vessel too near home to give her up to any ship, and I can hardly believe your gallant commander capable of making a dog an excuse for seizing it."

"He is not!" indignantly interrupted Allen.

"Such is not his reputation," coolly assented the other, "but I have sworn to take this lugger into port, myself. I am willing to permit assistance, but no superior; neither will I suffer a brute, to which I owe my life, to be slaughtered, unjustly."

"Now, if you will direct your boat to take me to the frigate, I will explain my wishes to your commander, while you remain here as a hostage—not for my safety, but for that of the lugger!"

"Go right ahead—but look out for squalls!" assented and warned the naval officer, glad of a loophole out of the difficulty, and admiring the pluck of him who suggested it.

"Dick?" called the youth, in trumpet-like tones.

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the hoarse response from below.

"I am going aboard the frigate! The lieutenant remains with you. It matters not if I'm detained, but this craft, and all in it, goes up if there is any attempt to hold, or board it!"

"Ay, ay, sir! I understand ye!"

CHAPTER III.

A PLUCKY PRIVATEERSMAN

WHILE the privateersman was talking to his companion below, the naval officer beckoned to the wondering crew of the cutter to approach, and as the boat was about to touch the lugger, the former called:

"I'm going to the frigate now, Dick! Be careful that this gentleman is not carelessly, or carelessly, injured."

As "Dick" returned the customary response, the cutter made fast to the lugger, and the privateersman entered it.

"Good luck to you!" exclaimed Allen, as the boat pushed off. "Good luck to you, and the quartermaster, too!"

The privateersman responded with a graceful inclination of the head, and a minute later was ascending the side of the frigate.

Going straight to the quarter-deck, where Decatur—looking both angry and perplexed—stood surrounded by his officers, he began:

"Sir, I have come on board to explain who and what we are, and why your orders regarding that dog have not been—and will not be—obeyed."

Amazement, compassion—everything except approval, took the place of the curiosity hitherto expressed in the faces of all but the frigate's captain.

"Proceed, sir!" directed the latter, his countenance becoming perfectly expressionless.

"In a moment, sir!" returned the privateersman, and drawing a folded paper from his breast, handed it to the captain—or rather commodore—as he continued:

"That is all the written evidence I can now produce of the truth of what I am about to say."

"Proceed, sir!" in the same stony style.

"That document, sir, as you will see, gives me—Jack Lang—the rank of third lieutenant of the lugger privateer Hell Afloat, and of that craft, I am the only officer left—on board."

Jack Lang then repeated the story of "Quartermaster's" having been sent for the flag.

"At there is punishment deserved by any one, 'tis by me, not by an innocent animal, which, with the man you hailed, and a negro now lying

in his berth, assisted me in working the lugger along the coast.

"The dog you have ordered hanged is one of the connecting links in my existence. The man you hailed is another, and the negro is the third."

"I have sworn that that lugger, and all in it, shall reach port together, or go to Kingdom Come together. You can sink us with your guns, but you cannot capture us, and if you do sink the lugger, you will fail to hear something which you would be pleased to know, besides losing the craft before you."

"Why cannot we capture the lugger? And, granting that to be the case, how can you bring her into port if I wish to detain her?"

The captain spoke in a calm, pleasant tone that astonished his officers, who were expecting orders to arrest the bold stranger and seize his craft.

"If I am held here, that will end the matter. The man you hailed is now below at the magazine—ready to fire it if you attempt to board the craft—even to take off your first lieutenant."

Shooting a suspicious glance at the privateersman, the captain asked:

"How am I to know this is true?"

"You will have to take my word for it," was the cool reply.

Looking a little amused, the captain turned toward his officers, asking:

"What do you advise, gentlemen—treat this statement as correct, and return this officer for our own, or—"

There was no response for a few moments, during which the officers exchanged inquiring glances. Allen was almost as great a favorite as the commodore himself; the stranger's manner impressed all—made them fear he spoke the truth—and no one cared to risk advising a course which might cost their comrade his life.

Decatur saw and understood this, and smiled approvingly when the privateersman suggested:

"Perhaps Mr. Allen would like to have a voice in the matter himself?"

"As he is the most interested party, you are probably right; but how is it to be done without danger?" asked a lieutenant, and, turning to the captain:

"I will pull close enough to talk to him, and to pick him up if he decides to jump off."

The commodore nodded assent, and, keeping his eyes on the privateersman to note the effect of this suggestion, responded:

"A good idea, Mr. Warrington; see to it at once."

"A very good idea," coolly amended the stranger; "but it is not necessary to go to that much trouble. I'll ask him!"

For a moment all were ready to spring on the speaker, who jumped to the rail as if intending to escape overboard, but instead he hailed the lugger:

"Lugger shoo-oy! There's a trumpet hanging beside you at the wheel!"

Lieutenant Allen was seen picking up the trumpet, and then coolly responded:

"Well! What's wanted?"

Waving aside the speaking-trumpet, which Decatur himself proffered, and using his hands instead, the privateersman's ringing voice explained:

"Lieutenant Warrington proposes going close enough to pick you up! Will you jump?"

"You have my word to the contrary!"

As the lieutenant shouted back this answer, the big dog came toward him, and he continued:

"Your quartermaster is on guard!"

"Unnecessarily!" returned the privateersman in the same laughing way that Allen had referred to the dog. Then, changing his tone and exerting his powerful voice to a startling extent, commanded:

"Down, Quartermaster!"

The dog disappeared below immediately, and turning to the astonished group behind him, Lang explained:

"Quartermaster was sent to guard Mr. Allen, but, as you see, it is unnecessary; he has pledged his word to remain in the lugger until I return. That, too, however, is unnecessary; for it was the safety of the vessel, and not of myself, I had in view when asking his promise to remain until I had explained why your orders were not obeyed, and if the lugger is allowed to proceed to New York you are at liberty to put a couple of men on board to assist in managing her, holding me in their stead."

"Cool!" was the mental and muttered comment of the listeners generally, but the captain, who had been sizing up the bold young priva-

teersman, and appeared much interested in him, asked:

"If I accept your proposition, what have you to offer in exchange besides yourself? Two men are not to be given for one without good reasons; and, again, why are you so anxious to get that vessel to New York unmolested—unsearched? Is it treasure-laden?"

"It is not, sir. I wish to offer it to the United States Government, and, if possible, obtain command of her, but if you will put your men on board (taking me in exchange, and send a letter giving my companions and myself due credit), I will put your ship alongside an English man-o'-war inside of twenty-four hours."

"Done!" cried the delighted Decatur, who was aching for an opportunity to outdo Hull's victory over the "Guefriere."

"Very good, sir! Allow me to take your cutter back to the lugger for my effects, and I will return with Mr. Allen."

"May I select the two men from your cutter's crew, and will you instruct them to obey my white companion, Doubledick?"

"I will! and I will make you an officer if you fulfill your promise—a naval officer, not a privateersman!"

The emphasis on the stranger's present profession, showed the scorn with which the regular service regarded those engaged in privateering.

It was too early as yet; they had not had time to know how valuable these same private armed vessels were capable of being, and afterwards proved to be.

Flushing slightly at the really unintentional cut, the privateersman entered the cutter, (two of the crew of which were appointed to aid in navigating the lugger into port,) and shortly after was seen shaking hands with Allen.

CHAPTER IV.

A DANGEROUS DOCUMENT.

MUCH interest had been manifested by those on the quarter-deck of the frigate as the cutter drew close to the privateer, and considerable surprise expressed that it did so without any warning to the other privateersman, in view of the threatened firing of the magazine.

"Looks very much as if that threatened blowing up was more imaginary than imminent," remarked one of the group.

"It carried him through without a search, at all events," returned another.

"Well, we'll have him back to pilot us to the Britisher, anyhow," consoled the second lieutenant—Shubrick, adding:

"And I wouldn't wager much, gentlemen, that the danger was so very imaginary."

He was alone, however, in thinking thus, and Decatur soon began to hear dubious remarks—not intended for his ears—regarding the wisdom of allowing the privateersman to return to the lugger.

"Hello! He's coming back, after all!" suddenly exclaimed one of the doubters.

"Yes, and hang me! if he isn't bringing the quartermaster and crew with him," laughingly added another.

The last remark was called forth by the sight of the man who had been at the lugger's helm, and the dog, following Allen and Lang into the boat, four of the cutter's crew, instead of two, leaving it to make room for them.

Somewhat puzzled, but confident in the judgment of his lieutenant, Decatur quietly awaited the arrival of the cutter, heedless of the jesting remarks of those around him.

"I am leaving four men, subject to your approval, sir, to take the lugger into port," reported Allen, on reaching the quarter-deck.

"This man, sir, begged to accompany me—the dog I could not leave—and I hope you will allow both to remain," supplemented Lang.

"We've been together nigh t' twenty years, yer Honor, an' I know ye'dn't be the man t' go for t' part us, now," confidently put in "This man," removing his cap, and making an awkward bow.

"How about swearing to bring that craft into port under one of yourselves?" questioned Decatur, dryly and suspiciously.

"You forget the negro, sir! He is still on board, and though too weak to be of service, will be in command—nominally," quickly replied Lang, adding:

"And now, if it is your pleasure to receive us, I will go aloft with Doubledick, and keep a lookout for the English ship?"

Glancing from the lithe, active form of the speaker (now clad as a common seaman), to the sturdily-built Doubledick, the commodore decided:

"Yes, you may remain—all three."

"In what direction lies this ship? How do

you know she's English, and how came you to escape her?" he continued.

"Dick knows her even better than I do, sir (having served on her), and she should be about twenty miles south of here. We happened to sight her, first, as a frigate is rather easier to see than a low-lying lugger, and as the wind was light (especially during last night), we managed to escape notice, and this morning lost her entirely."

"It's the Macedonian, yer Honor," confirmed Dick, when his former superior had ceased. "I'd know her out of a thousand—blast her! I was impressed from a privateer, an' spent a good year aboard her, when she was first afloat."

"Well, go aloft—and the sooner you sight her again, the better off you'll be," and turning to Allen, the commodore continued:

"Get the ship under way: then come below."

Both orders were promptly obeyed, and as the commodore entered the cabin, the frigate and the lugger were parting company.

It was then a little after noon, eight bells (12 o'clock) having been struck when the cutter returned from the lugger, and the crew were piped to dinner as soon as the ship was under way.

With the breeze that was blowing (according to the statement of Lang and his companion), the frigate should have sighted the enemy within two hours, but when the first dog-watch was called at four o'clock, there had been no report from aloft, and Decatur began to look angry and suspicious, while knowing looks and grins were exchanged among officers and crew—all except Allen.

When the boatswain piped to supper, the general opinion was that the "old man had been nicely sold," and, moreover, that the lugger's full crew had been concealed below.

"She was treasure-laden, and we missed a good thing," declared one of the midshipmen, at the mess-table, that night, and he voiced the opinion of nearly every man on board.

"Well, I wouldn't care to stand in his shoes if that Englishman does show in sight before to-morrow morning," remarked another middy.

"Nor I. The 'old man' looks sour enough now," rejoined the first speaker.

And so the feeling that the commander had been tricked continued to grow (although all did not share the middy's opinion that the lugger was treasure-laden), until eight o'clock, when, as the first watch was set, Doubledick descended from the maintop.

"Well, sir, have you sighted that Englishman yet?" demanded the lieutenant in charge of the watch.

"No, sir."

"What brings you down, then?"

"Well, ye see, sir, we didn't have overmuch rest since leavin' the Bahamas—not more'n time t' eat a bite, for, d'ye see, three of us had plenty t' do t' look after even a lugger; so, as we've on'y one night-glass atween us, Master Jack thought as how I might as well turn in till eight bells (midnight)—an' I wouldn't mind gettin' a bite afore doin' it, sir."

The commodore had heard the seaman's explanation, and when the lieutenant looked to him for instructions, hesitated a moment as if about to order Doubledick aloft; but he changed his mind, apparently, and asked:

"Have you eaten nothing this evening?"

"Not since early this mornin', sir."

"Hem! Better do so now, and turn in as you propose."

"Your companion has eaten nothing either, I presume?"

"Not a bite, yer Honor, an' it'd be a mercy t' send him up somethin'."

"Woodruff!" called the captain, and directed the midshipman who responded to tell "my steward to give this man whatever bread [ship's bread] and meat he wants."

"They have not yet been assigned to any mess," he continued, speaking half to himself, "and may never be assigned to one!"

Although these significant words were barely audible, Doubledick started as if alarmed, and the lieutenant and midshipman, who had also caught the words, exchanged significant glances as they noted their effect.

"That fellow started as if you had struck him, sir," observed the lieutenant, as the sailor followed the midshipman toward the cabin.

"Indeed?"
The surprised tone of the inquiry proved that the captain had been unconsciously uttering his thoughts, and rather confused the lieutenant, who hastily replied:

"Yes, sir. When you spoke as if you thought

he was, they were suspicious, the fellow looked pretty well scared, as if you had hit the mark."

"Ah, indeed? Send Mr. Allen to the cabin," and without further comment on the lieutenant's exaggerated statement, the captain left the deck.

But the mischief was done, and though the hasty words were already regretted, it was too late—like the discovery of the fool who playfully blows your brains out with an unloaded gun.

"What d'ye think of these privateersmen now?" asked Decatur as Allen entered.

"As I have from the beginning, sir, that you gained by the exchange—even though you gave two for one. It is true we should have sighted the English frigate hours ago, but she was liable to change her course at any moment."

"Very true; but have you noticed the discrepancies in their statements? The younger one says his companion knew the Macedonian because of having sailed in her, while the other claims they have not been separated in twenty years! If that be true, both have sailed in her, for the Macedonian has not been off the stocks much more than two years, and—

"Hello! What is this?"

The commodore had thrust his hand into the breast of his coat, when he thus suddenly interrupted himself and drew forth a folded document.

"Oh! The gentleman's commission! I forgot to look at it," he continued, and carelessly opened the parchment.

In an instant his manner changed, and became all attention, and in another instant he sprung up, exclaiming:

"Allen, we have been tricked! The fellow gave me the wrong document! That's a commission from the English Government!"

The lieutenant stared in amazement at the document, which was indeed an English commission to Captain Geoffrey Gerard. There was no doubt in it, and Allen could only look inquiringly at his superior.

"Have the gratings rigged for punishment!" ordered the latter, adding:

"We will have the truth out of them—one way or the other. The officer will probably be the hardest to make talk, so, as I don't wish to use the cat on him, send the other here first."

Allen arose and left the cabin without a word, and in a few minutes returned with Dick Doubledick.

"What is the meaning of your trickery this morning?" demanded Decatur. "It's useless denying you are here under false pretenses, for there is your captain's English commission."

The brawny seaman glanced curiously (but without any indication of alarm) at the commission, and shook his head deprecatingly as he replied:

"Yer Honor knows best, but as I can't read, why, ye see, sir, I couldn't tell what it is. As for trickery, why, you saw all ther' was o' that, an' it was only till Master Jack had a chance t' tell 'bout Quartermaster, that I stayed at the magazine."

Repeated threats of flogging failed to alter, or add to this statement, and becoming exasperated at the seaman's obstinacy, Decatur ordered:

"Take him up, and try what effect the cat will have! Call the other down to witness the punishment, and give him the same when the surgeon says this fellow can stand no more to-night!"

Dick looked bewildered, and when touched on the arm by the boatswain's mate, turned and followed that officer to the gangway, where he was ordered to strip—"all hands" being summoned by the boatswain.

The commodore now appeared on the quarter-deck, and, after a moment's hesitation, ordered:

"Seize him up!"

It was a clear moonlight night in October, and happening to glance aloft, as Dick was being lashed by the knees and elbows to the gratings, Decatur noticed the figure of a man in the main-top-gallant cross-trees—Lang.

"Why is that man allowed to remain aloft?" he demanded.

"Sail ho!" came the hail from aloft, at the same moment.

"By Jove! I hope it's the frigate!" exclaimed Allen, but his very tone told how slim that hope was.

CHAPTER V.

AN ENGLISH SPY.

It is more than likely that Decatur was relieved by the hail from aloft. At all events, it was he who responded with:

"Whereaway?"

"On our lee bow, sir!"

"Can you make her out?"

"A frigate, sir, I think!"

"How steering?"

"Same as we are, sir!"

"Ay, ay, a frigate, sir!" came a chorus from a half-dozen lieutenants and midshipmen, who had sprung into the rigging at the announcement that a sail was in sight.

Punishment on board a ship was never a pleasant spectacle—generally a heart-chilling one—and all were glad to hear what was at first suspected to be merely a ruse of the man aloft. so well confirmed.

The ship had been hove to for the past five minutes; Allen was one of those aloft, and before he regained the deck, the voice of Decatur was heard issuing the orders:

"Hands make sail! Topmen aloft! Loose top-gallant sails and royals! Clear away the flying-jib!"

The orders were hardly uttered, when the gaskets were off, and the sheets hung fluttering from the yards. In another minute the sheets were home, the sails hoisted and trimmed, and the noble old frigate darted through the waves as if the eagerness of pursuit which quickened the pulses of the crew had been communicated by an electric shock to her own frame.

Although there was still a suspicion of a trap of some kind, Allen, on reaching the quarter-deck, reported:

"Nothing in sight but the frigate, sir."

This put Decatur in great good humor. He had the enemy in sight, and a clear field—at present, at all events. Confident in the skill and bravery of his officers and crew, and the speed of the United States, he cared little for what might crop up later.

Five minutes after Allen descended, Lang appeared on the quarter-deck and reported:

"I am almost certain the frigate in sight is the Macedonian, and should like to get some rest before we engage her. If you will kindly assign me to some particular duty, I will turn in until we beat to quarters."

"How came you to fail to report her until your companion was about to be punished—and why did you not descend when all hands were called on deck?" demanded Decatur, speaking quietly, but watching the other closely.

"Dick punished?" exclaimed Lang, in unfeigned astonishment.

"Not punished, but about to be," corrected the commodore, adding:

"Had you obeyed orders, and descended, he would have been. Why did you not do so, sir?"

"Because I volunteered aboard this ship for a special purpose, sir," was the calm reply.

"That purpose I feel sure is accomplished, and I came below to obtain much needed rest, before volunteering for any other service you may deem me fitted for," added the privateer-man.

"Humph! And your failure to report the vessel in sight before?"

"Was partly due, sir, to the fact that, for over a week, I have had scarcely any sleep, and partly because the vessel in sight was under little or no canvas until she probably sighted us. Then, she began to make sail, and I saw her."

"Running away, eh? Or leading us into a trap?" asked Decatur looking keenly at Lang.

The latter appeared to be astonished at the question, and smiled as he answered:

"You can judge of the likelihood of the Macedonian running away, sir, when I tell you she is only two years old, one of the fastest sailors in the British Navy, and mounts forty-nine carriage guns.

"As for leading you into a trap—I do not see how that is possible, nor understand why it should be done."

This frank statement rather staggered Decatur, who knew it to be the exact truth, and while hesitating as to whether he should reveal his possession of the commission, the other added:

"The Macedonian is only four months out of dock, and as good—as good, than new."

This was knowing too much, Decatur decided—all his former vague suspicions returning.

"But you've overreached yourself, my lad," he thought, and aloud, dryly remarked:

"You appear to know a little about this Macedonian, yourself."

"I have told you all I know, sir, and that was the result of a visit to her, while she was being overhauled, some six or seven months ago," promptly explained Lang, adding:

"But I would not have recognized her to-night, had not Dick pointed out certain peculiarities about her last night. He knows her well, having sailed in her."

"And you did not?"

"No; certainly not, sir!"

"Yet your companion claimed that you had not been separated in twenty years—and in your presence, too!"

The commodore spoke a trifle triumphantly, expecting this contradiction in the statements of the confederates—as he deemed them—would confuse Lang, but he was mistaken, for the latter calmly admitted it.

"Lying is Dick's besetting sin," he explained, "and I am to blame for allowing that particular lie to pass, but he is a thorough seaman and a faithful fellow, and I did not deem the matter of sufficient importance, nor your quarter-deck a proper place to check him for it."

"We were separated for a year, and it was in seeking information regarding his whereabouts that I visited the Macedonian."

"And now, sir, will you kindly inform me for what Dick is, or was, to be punished?"

"In a moment," and stepping a little aside, so as to command a better view of Lang's face, Decatur suddenly demanded:

"Have you ever heard of Captain Gerard?"

Lang started almost imperceptibly, but enough to satisfy the commodore that he had, although the former coldly replied:

"There is no such person in existence."

"Was he the commander of the lugger?" asked Decatur, as the thought occurred to him that Lang might have accidentally picked up his former captain's commission.

"He was not, sir!" emphatically replied Lang.

"Come with me!" directed Decatur.

Lang followed him to the cabin, where, still lying on the table, was the tell-tale commission.

"Now, sir, you have declared that there is no such person in existence as Captain Gerard," sternly began the commodore, picking up the commission.

"And still do so, notwithstanding what that document may show to the contrary," coolly interrupted Lang.

"Is the name a fiction, then, or the document a forgery?"

"Neither, sir; but it should have gone to New York with a letter I sent with yours, instead of another document—the one which I supposed I was handing you."

"You need have no fear about its reaching the proper parties, unless you can satisfactorily explain your possession of it," was the significant rejoinder.

"That I shall not at present attempt," quietly declared Lang.

"Then, Captain Gerard, I shall place you under arrest as an English spy!"

"For your own sake, I hope you will be able to explain this document to the satisfaction of the court-martial, which will be convened as soon as possible after we have captured the Macedonian."

CHAPTER VI.

"MORE AND MORE MYSTERIOUS."

COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR—than whom no braver man ever lived—quick and fiery himself, admired the cool bravery of the young man who had at the very outset defied his power, and who now accepted his arrest, (and its almost inevitable fatal consequence) as calmly as an invitation to dinner.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" he asked.

"You can, sir. I have fulfilled my promise in bringing you in sight of the British frigate, but my companion and myself had promised ourselves the pleasure of participating in the engagement. That was my main reason for allowing him to leave the lugger, (or I know how he hates the Macedonian) and I hope you will not prevent our doing so!"

Too amazed—bewildered—at this speech to make any immediate reply, Decatur paced the floor in silence, wondering what point the speaker had in view, and half-tempted to try him by raising the request. At length, confident, (as usual) that the impending combat would end in his favor, he began:

"You have made a strange request for an English officer—"

"I beg pardon for interrupting you, sir—but I am not an English officer!" earnestly declared Lang.

"Then, in Heaven's name, who and what are you?"

"Simply, Jack Lang, sir."

"If that be true, why this mystery about the possession of so dangerous a document, as that commission will certainly prove to be, in view of your statement on coming aboard?"

"That I can easily explain, but not now, because the proof of my explanation has gone with what I supposed was that commission," quietly answered Lang, adding:

"All that I have told you of my story is strictly true. What I have not told you, concerns only myself, and those who were my companions on board the lugger in an enterprise, which, if desperate, was not disgraceful."

"This is folly, sir! How do I know that you had not sufficient men aboard that lugger to overpower those I sent with her? And, if your story be true, and your intentions not hostile to this country, why should you not reveal the meaning of your possession of an English commission?"

Lang shook his head sadly, and in the negative, as he answered:

"No, I cannot. Perhaps, if we were further away from home—somewhere where your authority was supreme—it may be that I would feel compelled to explain in order to save my life, but, as it is, I do not."

"More and more mysterious!" exclaimed Decatur, with an impatient laugh, adding:

"And since you can sing, and won't sing, you must remain under arrest until you do. However, you will be at liberty to witness the action which you have brought about, be your intentions good or ill."

He had noticed the (now) prisoner's reference to America as "home," and was still tempted to trust—or at all events try him, by placing him and his companion at the guns, and Lang's reply made him still more inclined to do so:

"I thank you, sir, though it is not as a spectator I had hoped to witness the coming fight. Mine is not a name expected to be found in dispatches, or general orders, but I had hoped to make it possible to mention it, to-day."

"It is still in your power to do so," returned Decatur. "Explain the commission, and I will receive you as a volunteer, in whatever position you are capable of filling."

"Again I thank you; but as my proof has gone forward, and as my mission was a secret one—and not one authorized by this Government—I prefer to wait, but you will remember that I could easily explain (by misrepresenting the fact) that that commission belonged to the late commander of the lugger."

This was the truth. Decatur was anxious to believe the speaker a friend, and would have accepted the explanation referred to, almost without question.

"It is true," he admitted, "but you have declined to make any explanation, and must therefore remain under arrest until you do."

"Be it so; but we will be at liberty?"

"Oh, yes! Two men can hardly do us much harm, even if you meant to do it."

Lieutenant Allen entered at this point, announcing:

"Wind is dying away so rapidly that we are scarcely moving, but the enemy is shortening sail."

"Ha! Going to wait for us, eh?"

"Looks like it, sir."

"She won't run," confidently added Lang.

"How do you know that?" demanded Decatur.

"Because they underrate us, and are only too anxious to avenge the losses which they have sustained—accidentally, as they regard them," quietly answered Lang: "they are anxious to get even."

This, again, was a puzzling answer, and the commodore exclaimed:

"You are either a great fool or a great knave!"

"The former I deny, and the latter I defy you to prove!" hotly retorted Lang.

Coal only to be sarcastic—when not in the midst of danger—Decatur was touched to the quick by the prisoner's defiance, and, turning to Allen, sharply ordered:

"This gentleman—Captain Geoffrey Gerard—and his confederate, are to be allowed to witness the engagement, but until then you will instruct the master-at-arms to allow no communication between them, nor liberty to either!"

Turning away as he spoke, Decatur left the cabin, and with a deprecating look, Allen who who had conceived a liking for Lang, motioned the latter to follow.

The ships were but two miles apart when Lang reached the deck, but, as there was not a capful of wind, Allen consigned him to the care of the master-at-arms, saying:

"This gentleman and his companion are under arrest—temporarily, I believe—but they are to be allowed to witness the engagement, so you will see to it that they are brought on deck as soon as the wind springs up."

"Thank you, sir!" said Lang, as, with a grateful smile, he turned to follow the wondering master-at-arms below.

CHAPTER VII.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE MACEDONIAN.

WITH breakfast next morning Lang was informed that he was at liberty to go on deck, and immediately availed himself of the privilege.

On deck he was joined by Dick, who had preceded him thither, and who promptly remarked:

"We're goin' t' have a crack at the Britisher pretty soon, Master Jack!"

"Yes, and, confound it! they've got the wind, and can fight as they please!"

"Ay, ay, sir! but no amount o' seamanship kin control the wind."

The United States had not yet beat to quarters, and these remarks traveled like wild-fire among the men (being uttered with every appearance of sincerity), until within a very few minutes all were satisfied that, whatever else the prisoners might be, they were not Englishmen, which proved of no small importance when the frigates closed.

Having the wind, the English frigate did (as Lang declared she would), fight at her own distance, but not a gun was fired in reply.

Immediately after the exchange of remarks between the prisoners, Decatur issued the order to beat to quarters, and the decks of the noble old frigate were cleared for action.

While this was being done, the Macedonian kept playing at long bows, and shot after shot was hurled at the United States. Soon, the range being fixed, these shots began to come through the rigging and across the decks, but not a gun answered, and the men—and officers, too—became impatient.

Wearing and maneuvering for some time, endeavoring to rake and avoid being raked, (that is, firing so that the shot ranges the whole length of the vessel,) the Macedonian began throwing her broadsides, but as these did not prove effective at the long distance, she bore down to the United States, carrying a bank of foam under her bows "like a feather-bed cast loose" as Dick expressed it.

Decatur, now in his glory, dressed as elegantly as if going ashore on leave, stood with one leg inside the hammock nettings, watching the enemy's maneuvers, as she blazed away like a house afire, as coolly as if he were receiving complimentary salutes.

Wearing first a larboard and then a starboard, delivering a regular broadside at every tack, the shot of the Macedonian, as she shortened the distance, soon began to do destructive work—first among the rigging and the lofty spars, and then one glanced off a gun-carriage, killing one man and wounding two others.

"Oh, blast it! I'd rather be back among the Turks at Tripoli—on their own decks!" exclaimed Dick Doubledick. "It's like a Dutch bargain—all on one side. I expect next thing, they'll order pipe down 'n' man the side-ropes for that 'ere Englishman to come aboard 'n' call the muster-roll!"

"Avast a bit!" returned one of the gunners; "never you fear the 'old man.' No English press-gang comes on board this ship!"

Standing with Lang on the quarter-deck, Dick's words were plainly heard fore and aft.

Silence reigned in the ship—every man at his station, the various crews at their guns, tackle cast loose, decks sanded, matches lighted, arms-chests thrown open, yards slung, marines in the gangways, powder-boys passing ammunition buckets, officers in iron-bound boarding-caps, cutlasses hanging by lanyards at their wrists, standin' like statues at divisions—all as silent as death!

Many an approving nod and glance greeted Dick's speech, and when the gunner who replied to it was carried by a shot through the opposite port, just as he finished speaking, Allen, who was walking up and down the quarter-deck, with his trumpet under his arm, went to the captain and hinted:

"The ship is ready for action, sir, and the men are gettin' impatient."

Without turning his eyes from the Macedonian, Decatur quietly asked:

"Are—you—all ready, Mr. Allen?"

"All ready, sir!"

"Very good! Don't—fire—a—gun—until—I—give—the—order--Mr. Allen! D'ye understand?"

"Ay, ay, sir!" responded the lieutenant, though not as cheerfully as usual, but he had gone as far as he dared.

A minute or two afterward, a midshipman from the main-deck came above, and saluting, reported:

"First division all ready, sir; second lieutenant reports that the enemy's shot have hurt his men, and he can with difficulty restrain them from returning their fire."

"Tell him to wait for orders, Mr. Allen!" directed Decatur, without turning his head.

As he spoke, the lieutenant of marines was carried away by another shot, just as the ships were coming together, and even the old veterans who had been with that glorious trio, Decatur, Lawrence and Somers, began to stare, when the commodore jumped on the deck, and in a voice that reached the gunners in the magazines, roared:

"Now, Mr. Allen—now give it to them—fore and aft—round and grape! Give it to them, sir, give it to them!"

Scarcely were the words uttered, before a sheet of flame burst from stem to stern of the United States, and the ship trembled from keel to trucks at the roar of her own batteries.

"Load away, my lads! load quickly, and don't throw away a shot!" cried Decatur.

The caution was unnecessary. While waiting for the commodore to join the frigate, Allen had kept the crew almost constantly employed at the guns, until their rapidity in loading, and accuracy in firing, could not be surpassed.

So incessant was the fire of the United States that she appeared to be one steady sheet, and the shouts from the crew of the Macedonian told that they thought the American was afire.

Although unnecessary in this case, the talk of a beloved commander is always encouraging—and Decatur was fairly adored by all under him. He was now in his glory, and his voice was heard everywhere, while his eye appeared to see everything—below as well as above—and each man delighted at the idea of his individual work being the object of his commander's attention redoubled his exertions.

"That's right! Speak to them, my boys, as they come along! Tell them to keep to the right, for here there's no thoroughfare—they're trespassers!"

"Well done below on the main-deck—don't spare them!"

"Steady now, Dick! Just a trifle higher—there!" cautioned Lang.

Almost simultaneous with the last words, Allen was heard singing out:

"Enemy's mizzenmast gone over the side!"

"Hurrah! We've made a brig of her!" cried Decatur, and to Dick Doubledick (who had quietly taken the place of the gunner carried through the port), and who had fired the shot under Lang's directions:

"Well done, my lad! Keep it up!"

He felt almost ashamed to look at Captain Geoffrey Gerard, having heard the latter directing the elevation of the gun—as above quoted; but Dick did not spare him.

The seaman was again sighting his gun when Decatur spoke, but paused to pat it lovingly, and declare:

"I'd a' missed bringin' it down on'y for master Geoff!"

"Enemy's about to wear!" roared out the master, but not in time to prevent the commodore from catching the last (and most suspicious) word.

"Bear down in his wake!" cried Decatur, darting a look of suspicion at "Master Geoff."

"Starboard your helm! Hands by the lee braces, and fore and main clew garnets! Ease off—let fall—haul on board the fore and main tacks!"

"Main-deck quarters below therel! Stand by the larboard broadside to rake the enemy's stern!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" replied Allen, and in less time, almost, than it has taken to write these orders, they were given and executed.

"Steady now, my men—cool in your aim. Fire!"

Swift at the word, the lambent flame of death flashed round from stem to stern of the United States. Forth hurtled the many messengers of death, and as they swept the decks of the Macedonian, the shriek of agony with which the broadside was received, told only too plainly how terrible was the execution.

Scarcely was the thunder of the first gun heard, when Decatur's voice again rang out:

"Ready about—man the fore-clew garnets—hands by the fore-sheet! Clew up!"

"Down with the helm, master. Helm's a lee!"

"Stand by the weather-main-topsail-brace and bow line! Main-topsail haul!"

"How's the enemy? Does she come to on the other tack?"

"No, sir; her mainyard's just gone," replied a voice at his elbow, forestalling the master's reply to the same effect, and adding:

"Elegant opportunity for another broadside, commodore."

It was, and no one knew it better than Decatur, who acted on the suggestion instantly, although he knew it came from "Master Geoff."

"Her rudder must be damaged," added the latter, musingly, while the commodore was ordering the delivery of the other broadside:

"Ready with the fore-topsail brace—haul! Now then, once more for our friend."

"Edge down on the larboard quarter, master."

"Stand by to give the enemy the starboard broadside! Ready there on the main deck?"

"All ready, sir!"

"Steady—fire!"

Once more the deadly storm was sent over the water, but this time the vessels were in actual contact, the bowsprit of the Macedonian having run into the mizzen rigging of the United States, and it was all the more destructive.

Decatur meant to deliver another broadside before closing, but, as the vessels touched, Doubledick shouted:

"Now's our chance!"

"Right you are! Come on!" cried Lang, leaping on a gun.

"Down, sir!" thundered Decatur.

But it was too late. Friend or foe, the men of the United States were following Lang aboard the English frigate.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRIVATEERSMAN'S PUNISHMENT.

WHEN Lang shouted his invitation, "Come on!" the crew—and officers, too—of the United States were burning with eagerness to get at the enemy, and seeing there was no restraining the ardor of the men, Allen, with a quickness that partook of inspiration, was the first to follow the stranger. Treacherous or true, the latter was not to have the honor of leading the Americans, whether into a trap or to victory.

The lieutenant and the prisoner touched the deck of the Macedonian almost simultaneously. A dangerous blow aimed at the former was warded off by the latter, and the next instant be killed the man who had struck at Allen.

This act caused the frown, which overspread the commodore's face when his order was disregarded, to give place to a grim smile, and this, in turn, to one of satisfaction, as he saw Allen, with the two prisoners, leading the boarders, and driving all before them!

There was little opposition to the Americans, the English frigate having suffered severely in men as well as spars and rigging, and within five minutes the Union Jack was down!

The moment the Macedonian struck her colors, Lang returned to the United States, and presented himself before Decatur, saying:

"I regret having disobeyed your order, sir, but the impulse to board was so strong, and so sudden, that I could not resist it."

"Any punishment you deem proper I will cheerfully undergo."

"Sure of that?" asked the commodore, in a curiously quiet way.

"Certainly, sir; and if it's not asking too much, will you kindly permit me to receive all the punishment? Dick would not have violated your order—"

"Enough, sir! Your request is granted," sternly interrupted Decatur.

"Your way of boarding the enemy has cleared my mind of certain doubts," he continued, now smilingly, "but you acted in direct disobedience of orders and shall be punished for it—by omitting your name from the dispatches, thus depriving you of the commendation you should receive for first saving Mr. Allen's life, and then gallantly seconding him in leading the boarders!"

"I was well done, sir!"

The ex-privateersman was listening in amazement until the last words were uttered. Then his handsome, sunburnt face flushed with pleasure, and he exclaimed:

"Hang the dispatches! I wouldn't exchange what you've just said for all the dispatches the ship could carry!"

This was a more plain—hearty—than polite mode of expressing his feelings, but Decatur did not appear to notice it, merely remarking:

"You will find mention in dispatches more

durable than words on the quarter-deck, when seeking appointment or promotion."

"Thank you, sir! Are we to remain as prisoners below, or—"

The commodore was watching Allen, who was angrily motioning the first lieutenant of the Macedonian to enter the boat waiting alongside for the English captain and his officers, and hastily answered:

"It doesn't matter about that. Mr. Allen will provide for you."

Lang bowed and went below, while Decatur continued to watch the embarkation of the prisoners (for the ships were now some distance apart), wondering what could have excited the anger of Allen, whom he knew to be a generous victor.

As the English officers were about to leave the Macedonian, the first lieutenant remarked:

"You do not intend to send me away without my baggage?"

The tone of the question was as surly as the words were insulting, but Allen quietly replied:

"I hope, sir, you do not suppose you have been taken by privateersmen?"

"I do not know by whom I am taken," was the rejoinder, rude as it was untruthful.

This roused Allen's wrath, and he ordered him into the boat instantly! Captain Carden was already on the way, and his lieutenant—and the other uninjured officers—obeyed immediately.

Nothing of this, of course, was known on board the United States, and all the officers were received with equal courtesy, and made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances, but Decatur made no effort to hide his anger, when, on inquiry, he learned what had passed between the two lieutenants.

To the almost incredible quickness with which the guns were handled, and the deadly accuracy with which they were directed, was, in a great measure, due the glorious victory, and to Lieutenant Allen's training the credit of this must be given.

In the engagement the Macedonian lost her mizzenmast, fore and main-topmasts, and main-yard (being much damaged in the hull and cut up in the rigging), while of her people thirty-six were killed and forty-eight wounded.

On board the United States the loss was five killed and seven wounded, and the frigate itself not seriously injured! A terrible proof of the difference in the handling of the guns.

To Allen was to be intrusted the honorable charge of bringing the prize into port, and while informing him of this, Decatur, remembering his privateer prisoners, continued:

"If I decide to send you in alone, you will have those privateersmen with you. Look into their story carefully—and don't forget that Lang did you a great service."

"Did me a great service!" echoed Allen, who was unaware of the danger he had escaped.

"Yes; you would probably be numbered among our list of dead, and certainly among the wounded, but for him."

"It is true," continued Decatur, in response to Allen's inquiring stare; "you were in danger of being cut down as you boarded—would certainly have been, had not Lang cut down the other fellow."

"Indeed! By Jove, I must see him! Where is he?"

It was evening when this conversation took place, Allen having just returned from the Macedonian, where he had been engaged with the repairs to that ship, and in transferring baggage and prisoners to the United States.

"I haven't laid eyes on him since he returned, immediately after she struck," replied Decatur, and remembering his parting words to Lang, added:

"By the by, I promised you would provide for him. There's no use keeping either him or his companion confined, eh?"

"I should say not, sir!" promptly returned the lieutenant, and so emphatically that the commodore smilingly asked:

"Then, you don't think that English commission so suspicious, after all?"

"In view of his conduct to day, and the explanation he promises on reaching port, I do not, sir."

"Nor do I," quietly coincided Decatur, adding:

"It certainly did look suspicious, but, as you say, his actions to-day give weight to the promised explanation—and I'm going to ask him to dine with me to-morrow!"

"You'll have a pretty full table," laughed Allen, who was not greatly surprised by this change of opinion.

"Yes, and I shall introduce him as Captain Gerard! Whil- not so infernally doubtful

about him, that commission will stick in my crop until I hear some explanation for his carrying it.

"Better see him at once, and convey my invitation—saying I shall introduce him to the English officers, as I've told you, and that if not known to them in any way, he will sail with you to New York, as soon as repairs are completed."

"Which will be about noon to-morrow," returned Allen, as he bowed and walked forward.

"Where is Lang—the privateersman?" he inquired a minute later, on meeting the boat-swain.

"Among the wounded, sir, in his hammock."

"Wounded?"

"Yes, sir. Hit in the thigh, I understand."

"Odd the commodore didn't mention that!" muttered Allen, and going to the surgeon, inquired if Lang was on the sick-list.

"He is, and will be for several days," replied the surgeon.

"Is it serious?" inquired Allen, a little anxiously.

"No; but he must remain quiet—must not move about for a few days. He was not aware that he had been hit for some little time, and when he did come to me, I had heard of his having saved you from being hurt, so I've taken the liberty of forgetting about his being under arrest, and placed him in my assistant's berth."

"Good for you, Canning! See that he wants for nothing. I must go see him."

"Not now, if you please; he's sleeping."

"Oh! very well; I'll see him to-morrow," decided the lieutenant, and again cautioning the surgeon to give Lang every possible attention, went to inform Decatur of what he had learned.

CHAPTER IX.

LANG CLEARLY IDENTIFIED.

DURING the morning following the taking of the Macedonian, Allen was busily engaged in getting that vessel in shape to proceed to port, and did not go on board the United States until a little after eight bells had struck, warning him he would be late at the commodore's table.

There were two vacant chairs, and as he seated himself Allen explained:

"I must apologize for delaying, but I wished to finish up before leaving. We are now all ready to set sail."

"You've made quick work of it," returned Decatur, and glancing significantly at the remaining vacant chair:

"But, where is our friend, Captain Gerard?"

"He was wounded, sir, I learned from the surgeon, but you were engaged with Captain Carden when I returned from visiting him, and in my hurry this morning I forgot to send you word—though his name must be on the sick-list."

"I did not look at the list of wounded very carefully, because I visited each man of them this morning, and I did not see Captain Gerard!"

Again the commodore emphasized the name, and glanced sharply at Captain Carden and the two English lieutenants who were among his guests, but they did not appear to recognize it, or be at all interested in anything except the dinner, which was now being served.

"Canning appears to have some liking for me, and, because of the service Lang had done me, placed him in his own berth," explained Allen.

"Sure he is hurt? I saw no sign of it," returned Decatur, rather suspiciously.

"He was not aware of it himself for some time, and that was how he came to get Canning's berth, for by the time he found that there was a bullet in his thigh, Canning had heard of his saving me from being hurt."

This explanation satisfied Decatur, especially as his unwilling guests appeared to be gloomily interested in their dinner only.

"It is evident Captain Gerard, or Jack Lang, is unknown to Carden and his officers," remarked the commodore, when, after the meal was finished, he and Allen were alone.

"I should be sorry if they had recognized the name," returned the lieutenant, and, after a few moments' thoughtful silence, added:

"I am half-inclined to look upon him as a secret agent of our own Government, who has been engaged in some desperate enterprise—and accomplished it, too!"

Decatur seemed struck by the idea, and thoughtfully assented:

"By Jove! that would explain his indiffer-

ence—or rather his certainty of being safe on reaching New York! I hope it's so, for he's a fine fellow, and although he will not be mentioned in my report, I shall not fail to use my best endeavors to secure him an immediate appointment."

"You will not mention his conduct—" began Allen, in a surprised tone.

"No; that's his punishment for boarding in defiance of my orders," laughingly interrupted Decatur, and he went on to explain what took place on Lang's return to the United States.

"We must take good care of him," he continued, "and as your friend, the surgeon, will look after the medical part, we must look to it that nothing else is lacking. I will give orders to my steward before I forget it."

Having summoned the steward, and instructed him to see that "Captain Gerard" was provided with every delicacy the ship afforded, the commodore began to pace the cabin floor, evidently mentally debating some question of importance.

"It's parting with the prize," decided the lieutenant, who sat watching his fiery superior, and lay back in his chair, leisurely puffing his cigar, to await the result.

Never slow in anything, Decatur soon began:

"We are in perfectly fit condition to continue the cruise, Allen, but there are so many English cruisers along the coast, and the prize is so valuable, that I think it best to accompany you—yes, I will!"

That, of course, was final, but as he looked toward Allen, apparently for approval, the latter promptly agreed:

"It will be the safest course to follow, sir. 'Twould be a pity to lose so fine a prize. I'd sink her before she should be retaken!"

Nodding approval of this sentiment, Decatur directed that the Macedonian be got under way, and proceeding on deck, issued the same order regarding the United States.

Both orders were quickly obeyed, and soon the prize and her convoy began the homeward voyage.

And much of what follows regarding the privateersmen would never have happened had they not returned in company.

The surgeon of the Macedonian had remained on board his ship to attend the wounded, and, to give the latter as much room as possible, Allen had picked a very small prize-crew.

Many of the junior officers and seamen of the English frigate had also remained on board, and as the wounded began to recover, Allen deemed it wise to strengthen his crew—exchanging some of his prisoners for additional seamen.

The ships were nearing Sandy Hook when Allen came to this decision, and signaling the commodore communicated his wishes. The latter approved; the vessels were hove to, and the exchange made.

Among the convalescent prisoners sent on board the United States was the third lieutenant and a passed midshipman of the Macedonian.

Decatur (who had just received the surgeon's report, and observed that Lang's name was no longer on it) had sent for the prisoner, intending to press him further for an explanation regarding the commission, in order that he (Decatur) might be in better position to push the claim, which he fully intended should be granted, for a commission.

It was not to be, however; for, as Lang approached, Gordon, the midshipman (who had been staring at the former as if he was looking at a ghost), exclaimed:

"Dixon! Look—it's Geoff Gerard, or his ghost!"

"By Jupiter!" was the assenting exclamation from the lieutenant.

Decatur had heard both—so, too, did Lang; but, the latter never changed color, never moved a muscle, as he advanced to and saluted the commodore. Apparently he had not heard them, and in a perfectly self-possessed tone and manner said:

"You sent for me, sir!"

"I did, sir," returned Decatur in a cold, hard tone. "I did sir! I sent for you intending to make another effort to obtain an explanation regarding your possession of that commission, in order to be sufficiently informed to push your interests intelligently. Fortunately, these gentlemen have saved me the trouble—I know you now in your real character!"

"I beg you pardon, sir, but that is impossible," quietly returned Lang (or Gerard), not at all abashed by the commodore's tone.

"What, sir? Do you mean to attempt to

carry the farce any further?" sharply demanded Decatur.

"I know nothing of any farce, sir," was the calm reply.

"Well, sir, you cheek surpasses anything I've hitherto encountered!" exclaimed the commodore, with an angry, scornful laugh.

"Why," he continued, "do you dare to deny that these gentlemen have recognized you?"

"As I do not know the gentlemen, and never to my knowledge laid eyes on them before, I cannot understand how they can possibly recognize me," answered the still unmoved privateer.

With an angry exclamation, Decatur turned to the English officers, whose countenances expressed both astonishment and resentment, and asked:

"Gentlemen, do you recognize this man as Captain Gerard?"

"Don't know about the 'captain,' but he's Geoff Gerard, or his double!" replied Lieutenant Dixon.

"We sailed together in the *Arethusa*, and everybody thought he went down with her, but it appears you didn't, Geoff—what's the row?" confirmed Gordon.

Lang listened to this overwhelming proof of his identity without betraying the slightest confusion. A scornful smile played around his lips, as, with his athletic form drawn up to its fullest height, he gazed almost curiously from Dixon to Gordon, as each in turn uttered their probably fatal declaration that he was Geoffrey Gerard.

"Well?"

There was an unconsciously triumphant ring to the tone in which Decatur uttered the monosyllable, though he could not help admiring the magnificent nerve of the accused.

"These gentlemen undoubtedly believe they know me—that I am Geoffrey Gerard—but they are mistaken.

This quietly but firmly uttered assertion of the prisoner, exhausted the commodore's patience.

"Such stubbornness is childish—and utterly useless!" he angrily exclaimed, and calling to the lieutenant of marines, who had been an interested and astonished listener, continued:

"Mr. Rush, take every care of this gentleman. He is Captain Gerard, of his Britannic Majesty's service—on board this ship under false colors, and, therefore, a spy!"

"A spy!" simultaneously exclaimed Gordon and Dixon, as the lieutenant of marines called two of his men, and sent them below with Lang, giving strict orders to guard him closely.

"A spy, gentlemen," Decatur repeated to the amazed exclamation of the English officers. "A spy is the only character in which Captain Gerard can be looked upon, and as such, I fear, he must expect to be treated—and you know what that means!"

Amazement now gave way to consternation, as the young officers realized that their ill-considered words had revealed the identity of a well-liked comrade, and would probably condemn him to a felon's death!

CHAPTER X.

WITH THE NOOSE ROUND HIS NECK.

DECATUR did not feel at all elated over the exposure of Lang's identity. He had formed a liking for the bold, handsome privateer—as the latter had falsely represented himself to be—and retired to his cabin immediately after uttering the ominous words recorded in the preceding chapter.

When Lang and Doubledick were first placed under arrest, the general supposition was that the cause was some irregularity in the papers of the *Hell Afloat*, but when the former was sent below between two marines, it was quickly noised through the ship that he was a spy—one of the marines having caught some of the quarter-deck conversation, and shortly afterward the commodore was reminded that he had left something undone, by a midshipman who came from the master-at-arms, asking what was to be done with "the man."

"Hang the—" impatiently began Decatur, but checking himself before the middy could decide who was the object of his superior's wrath, replied:

"Tell Mr. Flint that I will inform him when I have decided that point!"

He felt irritated enough before, knowing the almost certain result of the court-martial, which he must convene upon arriving in port, and the message of the master-at-arms made him feel as if he were being driven into sending these men to their death.

When the midshipman delivered the commo-

dore's reply, the master-at-arms was somewhat puzzled, not knowing whether it would be safe to place Doubledick in confinement until he had received further orders, but he knew his commander too well to trouble him again about the matter.

"Well, he made t' em my special care, and I'll keep my eye on this one," thought Flint, who had Dick with him below, but not under any restraint.

"He can't get away, and if the commodore sees him on deck, it'll be a reminder that the fellow's still at liberty," he continued (mentally, of course), and turning to Dick, explained:

"It seems you're not included in the spy business, so you're at liberty to go above, or wherever you please."

"Thank'ee," coolly returned the sturdy seaman. "As I've nothin' better t' do, I'll lie down a bit"—which decision sorely disappointed Flint, who had hoped he would go on deck.

"Well, if this ain't a rum go, I give up!" ruminated Dick, as he turned into his hammock. "Beat's anythin' I've ever run athwart. Now, if they'd a-sent me below with a couple o' jollies [marines], it wouldn't look so funny, but t' send him!"

Then he fell asleep, or appeared to.

The fact that Dick was not placed under arrest—or rather in confinement, for he was practically under arrest—led to the belief that he was an innocent tool of Lang's, and this, in turn, led to something much more important.

On the day following Lang's exposure, the United States and her prize arrived in the port of New York, amid the wildest and most joyous excitement. The individual injury done to the powerful navy of England by the loss of a frigate was nothing, nor was the mere capture of one the cause of the joyous excitement which prevailed throughout the country, when it became known that the Macedonian had been taken.

Following, as it did, the capture of the Guerriere, it broke the sea-spell which seemed to surround the English Navy, until "Old Ironsides" struck the first blow!

The people were inspired with a loftiness of feeling—a confidence that introduced a strain of patriotic sensations hitherto unknown, and Decatur's generous letter, according all the credit of the victory to Allen's work in disciplining the crew, caused New York to honor both with a superb banquet, while Rhode Island, Allen's birthplace, and Virginia, each presented the now famous lieutenant with a sword.

Notwithstanding all this, Allen was not altogether happy, for immediately after their arrival in port Decatur informed him of the recognition of Lang as Gerard.

"And I can't say that the discovery makes me feel particularly happy," concluded the commodore.

"But he declared that everything would be made plain on reaching New York—that his proofs had gone forward by the lugger to the naval office. Has he abandoned that claim?" asked the lieutenant.

"I do not know. Fact is, Allen, I've avoided him, and all reference to him, for the past twenty-four hours."

"Suppose I go see him? Hang me, if I can yet believe he's a spy!"

"It's only too true, and I'm sorry for it. But go see him, as you suggest."

They were on board the United States—both ships had just come to anchor, and regardless of the cheers of the excited crowds ashore, Allen went below to the berth deck, where he found the prisoner guarded by a sentry, but not ironed.

"Lang," began the lieutenant, unconsciously showing his faith in the prisoner by using that name, "Lang, you said everything would be cleared up when we reached port. Do you still hold to that?"

"I do, sir."

"Make no mistake, for your position is a dangerous one, and unless you are absolutely certain that you will be cleared of this most serious charge, do not hesitate to confide in me."

The lieutenant spoke earnestly, anxiously—almost affectionately, and, in response to the prisoner's inquiring glance, continued:

"I am going on to Boston with the prize, but, if there is any doubt of your acquittal, I will remain here."

Lang seemed much moved by these words, and after warmly thanking Allen for his offer, assured him there was not the slightest doubt of his (Lang's) acquittal.

"Indeed, mere acquittal of the charge of being a spy will not satisfy me. I have reason to expect a reward of some kind, and if there should be any choice in the matter, it will be a lieutenantcy on board your ship, Allen."

Said calmly and confidently, with a smiling face and extended hand, this impressed Allen as being the truth. Grasping Lang's hand, he exclaimed:

"You have relieved me immensely! And now, one word before I go:—how do you account for the mistake made by those Englishmen?"

"My resemblance to the man they mistake me for was enough to cause it, though, as they had rightly supposed, Geoffrey Gerard really is dead, and, notwithstanding the commission, was not a captain."

"Then you knew him?" questioned the wondering lieutenant.

"I did."

"Very well. I'll not ask you to reveal any more of what it is evident you wish to keep secret, and when we meet again, I trust it will be on the quarter-deck of this vessel."

With a cordial hand-shake, Allen returned to the quarter-deck, fully satisfied that the prisoner was in no danger. He found the commodore surrounded by excited visitors, and was quickly in the same condition himself.

During the remainder of the day there was no opportunity of conversing with Decatur; nor did Allen feel that there was any necessity for doing so, except to relieve the anxiety which he knew the former felt regarding the prisoner, and with evening came the public banquet, which was none the less splendid because of its hurried preparation.

Next morning Allen departed with the Macedonian, and immediately afterward Decatur received a visit from one of the naval officials, in response to a communication asking what information, if any, had accompanied his (Decatur's) letter—sent the Department by the privateer lugger Hell Afloat.

"Your letter rather surprised us, as we had not heard from you in any way until you arrived yesterday, and never of, or from, any such craft as the Hell Afloat!" announced the visitor.

"Strange," muttered Decatur, all his suspicions fully confirmed. "I sent you a letter by a lugger of that name, and placed four of my men on board to bring her into port."

"We have heard nothing from her, sir."

"Perhaps he admitted the truth to Allen," thought the commodore. "I must go to see him myself now, I suppose, though there's no doubt the lugger's crew were concealed below, and overpowered our men after we left her."

Which was the general opinion on board the United States until the Macedonian was sighted, when a revulsion of feeling took place in favor of Lang and Doubledick.

Bidding his visitor remain in the cabin, Decatur astonished all on board by going below to the berth-deck, where he found Lang reading a book loaned him by the surgeon.

The prisoner looked up with a serene smile, and on perceiving who was his visitor, arose from the gun upon which he had been sitting, saying:

"Nothing but good news could have gained me this honor—you have found my statements correct—that you have not been harboring a spy, sir?"

There was no anxiety, no eagerness, in the tone of the question or manner. He spoke as if stating a fact which he knew must, or should, have become known, and with such apparent sincerity that, for a moment, Decatur was fairly staggered.

"No, sir, I have not learned anything of the kind," Decatur returned, and speaking rather sharply, as the commission and identification came to his recollection, causing him to think: "This man is an excellent actor."

"It is certainly time you did, sir, and as I am a little anxious to be at liberty, it would be a great favor to me if you would kindly send to the Naval Department, and have my statement confirmed."

Decatur greeted this request with a short, angry laugh, and then severely replied:

"Captain Gerard, it is useless to attempt carrying the farce any further. The curtain dropped on it this morning—five minutes ago. I hope it will not rise on a tragedy."

"I do not understand you, sir?" declared Lang, in a surprised tone.

"I will enlighten you," was the ironical answer.

"As you were doubtless aware it would not, your lugger never reached New York, and

therefore your request is something worse than nonsense—impudence!"

"Never reached New York?" echoed Lang, in a dazed way. "What can have happened her?"

"Enough, sir! Acting will not serve you, and you may as well prepare for your trial, which will take place as soon as I can convene a court-martial."

"If there is anything I can do for you, let me know," continued Decatur in a kinder tone, as he turned away.

"If the lugger has not reached New York there is nothing you can do for me. I am indeed in an ugly predicament unless she is found," replied the prisoner.

He spoke in a hopeless, dazed way—like a man who had received a stunning blow, but Decatur expressed his opinion when he muttered, disgustedly:

"Still trying to keep up the farce!"

Returning to the cabin, the commodore informed his visitor of Lang's being a prisoner on board, and why, and a court-martial was held next morning. The commission was put in evidence, Decatur related the circumstances attending the prisoner's coming on board the United States, and his gallant conduct during the engagement with the Macedonian—dwelling on the saving of Allen's life, and the two English officers reluctantly repeated the identification of Lang as Geoffrey Gerard, a lieutenant in his Britannic Majesty's service.

That closed the prosecution, and the prisoner being asked what he had to say, replied:

"Nothing. My story—as little as I told of it—was discredited by Commodore Decatur; but I expected to be able to prove it on reaching this port. Now, it seems the lugger never arrived at this port, and having no proof, what is the use of repeating a story which there is nothing to confirm but the word of my companion—confederate, I suppose, you would term him."

As the prisoner finished, a note was handed to Decatur. It was only a line, and after glancing at it, he remarked:

"And not even his word. Your companion or confederate has escaped!"

The prisoner's eyes flashed at the intelligence, but he made no comment, and the court was left to make up its decision by itself, in the usual form.

The result of the deliberation, which lasted a half-hour, was a finding against the prisoner—his conduct in boarding the Macedonian—which was the sole cause of the delay—being finally decided to have been a trick to confuse the officers of the United States.

The court was opened, the record made up and read, and the judgment delivered:—that Captain Geoffrey Gerard suffer death the succeeding day, by hanging at the yard arm of the ship he was then on.

As Lang, or Gerard, expected nothing else, he heard his doom with steadiness, bowed to the court, and as he was led away to be placed in irons, remarked:

"As Geoffrey Gerard died in the Bahamas three months ago, it will be rather a difficult task to kill him again to-morrow!"

"Confound it! I wish I'd never seen that man!" exclaimed Decatur, as the prisoner left the cabin. "His steadfast denial of his clearly-established identity, makes me feel uncomfortable."

"Nevertheless, his identity having been clearly established, he must pay the penalty," returned the Judge Advocate.

And next morning at nine, a column of smoke glanced out of the bow-port of the United States, a yellow flag was shown aloft, and then came the report of the signal gun.

The yellow flag and the signal gun brought ev'rything to a standstill in all the vessels within sight—American and foreign, vessels of trade as well as of war—and on shore.

A few moments later, the seamen crowding the rigging of the surrounding ships, saw the condemned man led toward the quarter-deck, his arms bound behind his back at the elbows, his neck bare, and the fatal noose around his neck. After a few minutes, he was led to the gangway—the noose was fastened—the gun fired, and, then, as those who were appointed to the unpleasant duty of running aft with the rope on the main-deck, began to move, there came a mighty roar from the shore, as a four-oared boat came dashing toward the frigate!

In the bow of the gig was a fifth man, frantically waving a white flag to attract attention.

The men on the rope hesitated a moment at this strange sight, and then came the stern, admonishing order:

"Heave away there!"

CHAPTER XI.

DICK EXPLANATORY—MYSTERIOUS—VOLUBLE.

THE boatswain, who had admonished the seamen to haul away on the rope which was to swing Jack Lang at the yard-arm of the United States, was probably the only man on board, or anywhere in the vicinity of, that vessel, who was unaware of the approach of the boat mentioned in the previous chapter, and was so because he was standing with his back to the shore.

Scarcely was the order issued, when Decatur's countermand rang out:

"Hold! On your lives, do not move!"

He had recognized the man in the bow of the swiftly approaching boat as Dick Doubledick, and knowing the latter would not be returning unless for some important purpose, issued the order in time to save Lang's life.

The order and countermand were almost too much for the already sorely tried nerves of the prisoner; and when, a minute afterward, he heard the voice of Doubledick, fairly shouting, "Here's yer proofs, commodore!" he staggered, and would have fallen but for one of those appointed to run him up to the yard-arm.

"See to your friend!" ordered Decatur, taking, but without looking at them, the package of papers which Dick was eagerly offering him.

"Look to the prisoner, Mr. Canning! Have him taken below!" he continued, addressing the surgeon, and to the boatswain:

"Don't allow that boat to leave the ship's sidel!" and glancing at the bundle of papers: "Pipe down!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the prompt response from both, and a few moments after, the men were dismissed, and the prisoner was sent below.

With the first word, Doubledick rushed forward, cut the cords binding Lang's elbows, tore off the noose, and seized the latter's hands in his own.

"Hold on, hold on!" laughingly protested the surgeon, who had followed more slowly. "If you go on at that rate, you'll kill him—shake the life out of him.

"Come, Lang, let us go below to my quarters," and, taking the prisoner's arm, the surgeon led him from the deck amid tumultuous cheering.

Seamen detest executions under any circumstances, on board their own ship, because it is supposed to make the vessel unlucky, but in this case every man on board had heard Dick's cry: "Here's yer proofs, commodore!" and all felt that an innocent man had been saved from death, which was sufficient excuse for the breach of discipline they committed.

Following close after the first boat came a second and larger, containing, besides its crew, two ladies and the famous Fighting Jack Shubrick, who, in full uniform, sat handling the tiller-ropes!

The presence of Shubrick was sufficient to cause a whip to be rigged for the ladies, and having seen them safely on board, the big lieutenant followed.

"Well, Mr. Shubrick, this is an unexpected pleasure!" declared Decatur, with whom the other was a great favorite.

He shot an inquiring glance toward the ladies, who were a little 'n the rear, and Shubrick, in a low tone, explained:

"Interested in the prisoner, sir. May we go below?"

"Certainly!"

Turning as he spoke, the commodore descended to the cabin, followed a moment later by his visitors.

To account for Shubrick and the ladies, and their interest in the condemned man, we must accompany Doubledick after his escape from the United States, which was easily accomplished by means of one of the many shore boats which surrounded the ship—some with fruits and other delicacies for sale, others with visitors.

Dick happened to be passing when Decatur rather warmly announced to Lang that the Hell Afloat had never arrived, and that a court-martial would be held immediately.

"Then," explained Dick, when he and Lang, and their friend the surgeon, had reached the latter's quarters, "then I thought it was 'bout time somebody looked her (the lugger) up, an' as nobody else seemed likely t' do it, I just slipped off in a shore boat t' do it myself."

"I wasn't ashore more'n half an hour before I run across a coaster who's seen just such a craft ashore this side o' Barnegat. There wasn't much chance of a mistake—luggers ain't plentiful in

these here waters—an' I felt happy an' mis'able in the same breath. I'd found her—knew where she was't any rate, but couldn't get t' her—which was the main p'int—for I hadn't a shillin'."

"Why didn't you return, and inform the commodore?" asked the surgeon.

"Well, I was a-goin' t' do it, when I couldn't think of anythin' better; but, just as I'd made up my mind to it, I thought o' the ladies—you know," replied Dick, looking significantly at Lang.

"What of her? Is she safe?" eagerly questioned the latter.

"All safe, and in port, sir!"

"Well, how did you get to the lugger?"

Lang looked somewhat anxiously at the surgeon as he asked this question—not because of what it might bring forth, but because of what his previous question had betrayed. Surgeon Canning responded with an assuring nod, while Dick continued:

"Well, I inquired where the ladies were t' be found, an' when I got there met Lieutenant Shubrick. When I told my story t' the ladies, they told him, an' five minutes after he had a man off t' hire the fastest boat t' be got for love 'r money—he's a brick, I tell ye!"

Both of the auditors smiled at this outburst, and Canning, who knew Shubrick, exclaimed:

"You're just right, my lad!"

"Well, we got there all right, 'n' found everythin' upside down. The blasted man-o'-war's-men had found a cask o' rum, locked up Sambo in the forehold, 'n' run the lugger ashore while all hands were drunk!"

"Good God! And the—the—cabin?" burst from Lang's lips, his bronzed face paling, and his fists clinching.

"All right! All right, sir!" hastily assured Dick. "R-member how stout we made that door? They on'y tried it once, 'n' then gev it up. The door was too strong, 'n' the rum too temptin' t' bother any more."

A look of intense relief swept over Lang's face on hearing his companion's first words; and when the latter paused as if finished, he was calm again, and asked:

"Well, well—what did you do?"

"Oh, they (the man-o'-war's-men) were in a terrible stew when they saw the lieutenant—never saw men so scared before in all m'lfe. They fairly went down on the' knees t' him, 'n' when we left—our folks, ye know—they were workin' like niggers, an' bossed by one, Sambo, tryin' t' get the lugger off. The lieutenant hired some men t' help 'em, 'n' I reckon they'll work t' off at the next tide."

"Commodore wishes to see you, sir!" announced a midshipman, who entered as Dick ended his story—indicating Lang by a nod, and turning to the surgeon, added:

"That is, if you approve!"

"As I am not aware of the object, I am unable to judge whether—I see no objection to it."

The sudden change in the surgeon's views was caused by his seeing that Lang was eager for the proposed interview, and, when the latter had left with the midshipman, he gave Dick an approving slap on the shoulder, saying:

"You are a true friend, my lad! But for you that splendid specimen of manhood that has just left us, looking so proud and confident, would be food for the fishes—and not only that, but the papers you recovered is what enables him to look so proud and confident."

"Why, he didn't look scared when they were goin' t' hang him, did he?" asked Dick, apparently much alarmed at the idea.

"Oh, no! No, I meant that those papers (or oofs, you called them vindicated him—pr' ved that he was not an English spy."

"E'glish spy?" repeated the seaman, contemptuously. "Why, Lor' bless ye, sir! he might a' been an English lord if he'd a wanted to!"

"Phe-ew!" softly whistled Canning. "So, he is an Englishman?"

"Well, sir, it won't do for me t' get bowsin' out my jib without he says it's all right, but you've been friendly t' him, an' I'll just say this much anyhow—he can't swear he ain't!"

This strange answer did not tend to lessen the doctor's wonder, but before he could ask for an explanation, another middy bounced in with the order:

"Doubledick to the cabin—immediately!"

"Now, for the fun!" exclaimed the seaman, jumping up, and with a wink to Doctor Canning, followed the waiting midshipman.

Unfortunately, the surgeon was not present when Lang warned the commodore that Dick's "besetting sin" was an inclination to draw the long bow, and unfortunately, too, Dick had not

remembered that he was "bowsin' out his jib" (or talking too much) in time; for, hearing a slight noise in a cupboard of a room adjoining his own, Canning turned and saw his assistant—between whom and himself there was no love lost—engaged, apparently, in selecting some medicines.

"Confound that fellow!" muttered the surgeon. "He's always sneaking around—I wonder if he heard anything?"

He had, if one might judge from the malicious expression of the fellow's face.

CHAPTER XII.

LANG'S STORY.

WHEN Lang entered the cabin, he found Commodore Decatur alone, seated at a table, upon which lay Dick's "proofs."

"Be seated, Mr. Lang," he said, indicating a chair directly facing him.

The tone of the invitation, which was courteous, and the name, caused a flush of pleasure to mantle the prisoner's cheek.

"Mr. Lang," continued Decatur, "I feel as if you had been wronged, though you were not, for there was ample opportunity afforded you for explanation, but you would make none, and the natural conclusion was that you could not."

"I have sent for you now, to listen to any explanation you have to offer, for, though I shall be able to obtain a reversal of your sentence and a new trial on these papers, there is still much to be explained."

"Why, sir, do not those papers explain everything?" asked Lang, in a tone of great surprise.

"They do not; nor were your statements on coming on board this vessel exactly true. You left another person, besides the negro you mentioned, on board the lugger?"

Lang flushed with anger at first, but when the commodore finished was calm, and smilingly replied:

"I did not say that there was no one else than the negro left on board. I did say that Dick and the negro, and myself, composed the officers and crew that had brought the vessel from the Bahamas. How you learned it I cannot understand, but it is plain you know that there was a lady in the cabin of the lugger. That, surely, was no crime?"

Decatur bit his lip, and then, gazing fixedly at the other, returned to the attack:

"You stated that the crew had mutinied, and had gone to hang or torture the captain—intending to turn from privateering to piracy—when you seized the vessel, whereas they had, in fact, already committed at least one act sufficient to brand all on board as pirates."

"You will recollect, sir, that I did not pretend to tell all my story, and the act of piracy you refer to was my authority to seize the lugger at the first opportunity. All that, however, you know from the papers before you."

The commodore looked puzzled, and one by one examined the papers referred to before speaking again.

At length, looking as perplexed as ever, he asked:

"What do you mean by saying that I know all that you say, and, inferentially, your whole story from these papers?"

"Not the whole story, perhaps—" began Lang, when Decatur interrupted him with.

"One moment, sir! I wish to be entirely open with you, and will tell you just what I have learned in support of what you stated on coming on board, for I wish not only to clear you of the charge which I was compelled to make, but to obtain for you a commission and appointment to this ship."

"Thank you, sir!" simply acknowledged Lang.

"Your lugger is ashore through some negligence on the part of my men. Rum, I suspect, was at the bottom, but as yet have not been able to get at the facts. However, it was on its way to New York, and almost here (which proves your good faith in that respect); and, moreover, you left but one man on board, which upsets what the court deemed almost a certainty—that your crew were concealed below, and, when we had left it, overpowered our four men, and escaped with the lugger."

The prisoner smiled on hearing the commodore's last statement, but the latter shook his head deprecatingly, and continued:

"Here, too, is the commission you spoke of—of Jack Lang, as third lieutenant of the privateer, but that is all there is, except my letter, and it leaves much to be explained."

"Surely, sir, there are more papers—a sealed package, addressed to the Naval Department," cried Lang, springing up in alarm.

"Examine them yourself—I can find no more than I have mentioned."

It was quickly done; there were but two papers to look at; and, satisfied in an instant that there was no other, Lang looked up at Decatur, and with an expression half-angry, half-dismayed, exclaimed:

"I cannot understand it, sir! There was, as I have said, a package addressed to the Naval Department, with these papers."

"Perhaps your—the seaman Doubledick can explain what has become of it," suggested the commodore, adding:

"He may have forwarded it himself, or the negro may have done so, not knowing that these papers formed part of the communication."

"True, true! It would be like Dick!" declared Lang, in a tone of relief.

"I will send for him—"

"Excuse, me, sir, but before doing so, allow me to tell you what was in that communication, and to explain any points which do not appear clear to you. Then (although it is more than likely that package is safe, and will bear me out), if anything has happened to it, you will have heard me before questioning Doubledick."

"Very well; it can do no harm, at all events," assented Decatur, who felt both anxious and curious regarding the prisoner.

"But, before you begin," he continued, "let me caution you against saying anything which I might possibly feel bound to make known, for your commission, sir (if such a name can be given that document), is an appointment to an English privateer, and, putting aside the commission from the Government entirely, that would still place you in the position of a spy."

"Scarcely, sir, since when I came on board this vessel, I delivered up what I supposed, and announced, to be, my commission, as lieutenant of the lugger. There was, therefore, no *deception* as to my character."

"Very true! If nothing more, that will clear you of the charge of being a spy. By Jove, it's lucky you thought of that point! Handle the others the same way, and I'll have your appointment within a week!"

"I'll certainly make a try!" laughingly declared Lang; then he went on with his explanation:

"The package for the Naval Department contained a certificate from the English Admiralty Office, stating that the bearer was engaged in an enterprise which entitled him to the respect of all law-abiding people, of whatever nation—friendly or otherwise to England—namely, the detection of certain English privateers, suspected of piracy.

"For the successful accomplishment of this enterprise, the English Government offered a captain's commission, and the vessel, or its value, if it were seized.

"Geoffrey Gerard, who was a lieutenant in the English Navy, decided to take advantage of the chance for a captaincy, and sailed in the *Arethusa*, to be put ashore on the Bahamas, where it was pretty certain some of these privateer-pirates rendezvoused, but the *Arethusa* was wrecked there, and Geoffrey Gerard was among those lost—who were never heard from."

The last words were uttered in such a peculiar tone that Decatur, in an equally peculiar tone, asked:

"And was he lost?"

"It would seem so, since he was never heard from," quietly answered, or rather fenced, Lang, adding.

"And when he died, I took up the work. He was half American, anyhow, and I know it was his intention to throw away the commission, and present the vessel to the United States."

"You appear to have been on pretty confidential terms with Lieutenant Geoffrey Gerard," remarked Decatur.

"Very confidential indeed!" was the equally dry response.

"How did you manage to gain the confidence of the privateersmen, so as to accomplish your purpose?"

"As expected, the particular island the *Arethusa* was wrecked on was a rendezvous for several privateers, and through a few careless words it quickly became known that I—taking the place of Geoff Gerard, of course—was an English naval officer.

"Very soon I received an offer of employment (for it was generally understood that I had so disgraced myself in the service that, although not sought for, I could never hope to go

back), and as the offer came from the very man *I was looking for*, I accepted it."

"That was a bad slip of the tongue, Mr. Lang," mentally commented Decatur, referring to the emphasized words, and aloud:

"And this lady who was on the lugger when we ran across you?"

"Have you seen her?" quickly demanded Lang.

"I have."

"Then you know that I was confined below by a sprained ankle, at the time the vessel she was in was taken. It was piracy pure and simple—without a pretext—the boldest act yet done by Captain Helfer—or Hellfire, as his crew dubbed him; but it was his last."

"I had allowed one of the petty officers to see my—Captain Gerard's commission, and when it became known that I had been a captain, it gave me an immense amount of influence among the men, who hated Hellfire for his brutality—to themselves."

"When the vessel Miss Trumbull was taken, I managed to hobble on deck, but too late to save the unfortunate crew, who had been killed because Hellfire could not afford to take any prisoners, or prevent Miss Trumbull's companion from being accidentally shot by some of the privateersmen, while pursuing one of the crew who ran into the cabin."

"But you did manage to save the lady from harm—most gallantly, and at the risk of your life, she declared."

"Oh, it was not quite so dangerous as that," modestly disclaimed Lang. "Dick and Sambo were behind me, and, as I've already told you, my supposed former rank gave great influence with the crew—so much that, through Dick, I learned it only needed my consent to make me captain."

Decatur remained silent for several minutes after Lang finished his story, and then asked:

"You are withholding something, of course?"

"I am, sir; but, will not what I have told, with these two commissions, and the lugger, and Dick's testimony, be sufficient?"

"Yes, but not for my purpose. However, I'll bear Doubledick now, if you wish, though it's unnecessary and useless, for if you were a spy, and he your confederate, you would, of course, have a tale prepared for just such an occasion as this."

"Very true, sir; I had overlooked that," returned Lang, adding:

"I am anxious to hear about that package. Will you kindly send for him?"

CHAPTER XIII.

WHO LANG REALLY WAS.

WHEN Dick entered the cabin, the commodore motioned Lang to do the questioning, and the latter accordingly asked:

"Did Sam say anything about the sealed package I gave him?"

"No, sir."

"Did he give any papers to Lieutenant Shubrick?"

"Not as I know of, sir, but he might have done it."

"No, no!" interposed Decatur. "Had Mr. Shubrick received any papers, he would have mentioned the fact to me; he has been here."

Lang looked somewhat surprised, but making no comment, continued:

"You are sure these are all the papers you received, Dick?"

"Sart'in sure, sir."

"He kept none? Had no others?"

"Not as I know of, sir. In the scuffle he had with the man-o'-war's-men, they took the papers away, but gev 'em back ag'in when they found what they were."

"Commodore Decatur, if those papers—that package is lost, your men are responsible for it!"

For once his admirable coolness was conquered, and, although his tone was anything but respectful, Decatur, apparently, sympathized with him.

"I have entire confidence in your statement as you have made it, Mr. Lang," he said, and turning to Doubledick, asked:

"What was there about the scuffle you mentioned?"

Both the quasi prisoners now understood that Shubrick had not reported the conduct of the men placed on board the lugger, and Dick was embarrassed by the question.

"I see, I see!" declared Decatur, speaking in an ominously quiet way. "The men intrusted with the lugger have been having a good time—at the risk of another man's life."

He was white with suppressed rage, but after a few moments regained control of himself sufficiently to calmly declare:

"You shall not suffer any more than I can possibly help by the loss of that package—if it should be lost—Mr. Lang. I will send the launch to look after the lugger immediately, and, if you wish, allow yourself and this good fellow to go with it—free as the air you breathe!"

"Thank you—a thousand times, thank you, commodore!" exclaimed Lang, touched to the quick by this confidence.

"Better get ready at once, then, for I shall allow nothing but your absence to delay the departure of the boat," warned the commodore, adding:

"I will send a midshipman with you—it will be under your command, with directions to act as you think fit. If necessary, shoot them down like dogs!"

The speaker's temper had the mastery, now, and jumping up he began to pace the cabin-floor. Oblivious of the presence of the others, he continued:

"By the gods of war! To think that a officer, and a gentleman, came within an ace of swinging at the yard-arm of this ship because a parcel of rum-soaked scoundrels (they were his favorites among the crew) failed to half-way do their duty! Flaying alive is too good for them!"

"I beg your pardon, sir!" interrupted Lang.

"But, as I will not—can not—take advantage of your kind, generous offer, will you allow Dick to go alone in the boat?"

"Eh! Oh—yes. Why not yourself, as well?" asked Decatur, betraying his surprise.

"Because whatever mischief may have been done, cannot be remedied by my accompanying the launch, and whatever information there is to be gained regarding the package, Dick can gather even better than I could—for my presence, especially in command, might frighten them."

"Is that your sole reason?"

"Since you put it so sharply, sir—it is not!"

"All through you have exhibited a spirit of friendliness and confidence, not warranted by the circumstances under which I have become known to you, and I will not place myself beyond your control, until I am exonerated from the charge of being a spy!"

For one moment, Decatur looked at the speaker as if he would read his very heart. Then, with an approving nod, he turned to Dick and directed him to prepare to accompany the launch, adding:

"And, I shall order that any suggestions you may make, be given as much consideration as if they came from an officer, so, be both prudent and ready in offering advice, wherever you deem it advisable."

"Be careful, Dick!" warned Lang. "See that you do not abuse the commodore's kindness."

Half-an-hour later, the launch was on the way to Barnegat, and Decatur and Lang, who had watched its departure, returned to the cabin.

"I have been requested to send you ashore tonight," acknowledged the commodore, when they were seated, "but hardly know how to make the proposition. Lieutenant Shubrick will be here about the end of the first dog-watch—(six o'clock)—to use his own words—with the expectation of accompanying you to the home of the Ludlows. I shall be glad to have you go, but if you prefer to stay and dine with me, you may do so."

"Again, thank you! I prefer to remain. I will not, of my own volition, leave this ship until all doubt regarding my character has been cleared up."

Decatur looked pleased, but made no comment other than a careless "As you please, Mr. Lang."

Next day about noon the lugger and the long-boat were in sight, and for a short time there was considerable excitement on board the United States, which was not at all allayed when four men in irons were bundled into the boat and brought alongside the frigate.

Leaving the prisoners in the boat, the third lieutenant, who had been dispatched with the long-boat, followed by Doubledick, and a slim, boyish-looking mulatto—the Sambo referred to by the privateersmen—came on board.

"We found them all hard at work, sir, with the lugger almost off, but, as ordered, I placed them in irons," reported the lieutenant.

"Did you recover the package of papers?"

"No, sir. Martin, who had the papers for a short time, declares he returned all of them."

Decatur stamped his foot with anger, but, as a rule, where punishment was concerned, he re-

strained his temper, that no injustice should be done the offender through hasty judgment.

"Send them below! I can't talk to them just now," he directed, and turning to Lang:

"It is really too bad! I'll do the best I can, however, and, if you wish, we'll adjourn the court-martial, leaving you at full liberty meantime."

"Not at all, sir—let it go on! When at liberty, I may be able to find some trace of the papers, and, in any event, the offer of the English Government for that particular vessel can be proved within a few weeks."

"That is so. We will go on, then, this afternoon, have the charge dismissed, and address a communication to the English Admiralty, in order that you may be suitably rewarded."

"Come! We'll worry no more over the affair at present, and as they're about to pipe to dinner, we'll go to ours."

During the afternoon Lang's case was reopened, the charge against him dismissed, and a decided inclination shown to reward him without further proof, but the accused would accept nothing that even approached a *favor*. Whatever reward he received must come to him as a right—as a reward for services performed.

Secretly, Decatur was highly pleased at the stand taken by Lang, though he added his remonstrances to those of Shubrick and other officers who were present, when, the court-martial having acquitted the accused, expressing their confidence in him, and declaring his conduct in the finding and boarding of the Macedonian worthy of substantial recognition, Lang refused to accept any reward until he had proved himself all that he had claimed to be.

"Well, I suppose you must be allowed to have your own way about it," remarked Shubrick, "but you are not going to have it so that your friends will be deprived of your society. I am under orders to bring you to the Ludlows' (where Miss Trumbull is staying) to-night, and am instructed not to leave you until I have you safely anchored there."

"Very well," smilingly assented Lang; "since your orders are so positive, I suppose it is best to submit gracefully."

That evening, accordingly, Shubrick and Lang presented themselves at the home of the Ludlows, where the latter was warmly welcomed by all the members of the household, because—

"My dear sir, we can never repay you for your kindness—your gallant conduct in saving life—more than life!" declared Mr. Ludlow, grasping Lang's hand.

"Where is she—where is Nettie?" he continued, looking around the room, which, besides Mrs. Ludlow and her daughter, contained a number of visitors, invited for the express purpose of meeting Lang—the mystery still clinging to the latter apparently making him all the more interesting.

In response to Mr. Ludlow's call, a beautiful girl of seventeen, or thereabouts, came to his side, smiling and blushing as she shyly placed her hand in Lang's, and murmured a few words inaudible to even her uncle. Lang, however, seemed to understand her—and that was sufficient.

"Though it beats me how he could do it!" muttered the old gentleman, as, with the heroine and hero of the evening, he proceeded to introduce the latter to his wife and daughter, and their friends.

Lang passed a pleasant evening, which was only the first of many during the ensuing two months, and then came a letter from Decatur informing him that Lieutenant Allen had been appointed to the command of the Argus—one of the brigs captured at Tripoli.

"I know of nothing more wearisome than waiting, and no greater relief to an active mind than action, so it occurred to me that the pleasantest way in which you could pass the time which must elapse before we can hear from England would be with Allen. As there is a strong probability that he will fall in with a British man-of-war brig, reported as cruising in the Sound, I inclose you an acting order as lieutenant, which places you under no obligation, as it will not be confirmed until the British Admiralty sees fit to reply to our letter."

There was a postscript stating that Allen had just arrived with the Argus, and hoped Lang would join him at once, as he would leave port within a couple of days.

Lang had not found waiting, in this instance, at all wearisome. The Ludlows and their friends, and particularly Nettie Trumbull, had taken care that he should not; but the temptation of a short cruise, with the strong probability of an engagement, was too great, and he imme-

diately went on board the Argus, leaving at least one young lady quite angry at what she termed Commodore Decatur's officiousness, and unhappy over Lang's departure.

"Fighting Jack" Shubrick, too, had heard the news, and volunteered with the whole crew of the Hornet, hoping his "luck," which was universally believed in, would bring on an engagement.

"With two such lucky birds, as Shubrick and Lang have proved to be, you ought to have some news for us within a short time, Allen," remarked Decatur, jestingly, as, with the commodore of the Argus, and the two volunteers, he stood on the quarter-deck of the brig just before she sailed.

"I hope so," returned Allen.

And he had, and startling news, but it related to Lang, and not to the British brig-of-war.

"Jack Lang" had been positively identified as Geoffrey Gerard, by a dying man, who had unconsciously betrayed him, by saying:

"Master Geoffrey, you have succeeded to the title, and are now my lord!"

CHAPTER XIV.

LORD GEOFFREY GERARD.

For a week after leaving New York, the Argus cruised in and through the Sound, but without seeing or hearing of the British brig-of-war, and all on board felt disgusted—especially Shubrick and the men of the Hornet, who had volunteered in the expectation of an early engagement with the enemy.

Lang, too, felt disappointed, and when Allen announced, on the evening of the seventh day, that he intended turning back next morning, remarked:

"The presence of Mr. Shubrick and myself appears to have had a repelling instead of an attracting effect on the enemy."

He had heard of the superstition attaching to Fighting Jack's presence on a ship, but had not been long enough among his present companions to observe that, though treated as a joke, it was really secretly believed in. Indeed, Shubrick had himself volunteered in the hope that his "luck" would bring about an engagement, and the crew of the Hornet had followed him in the firm belief that it would do so.

"By Jove! Lang, you've suggested an idea!" exclaimed Shubrick. "We, together, as you say, appear to repel the enemy. Now, suppose we divide forces—take watch and watch—never appear on deck at the same time? As it is, or has been for the past week, it looks as if each was counteracting the magnetic influence of the other."

Fighting Jack spoke in a jesting way, as had Lang, but the latter was surprised to observe that the various officers standing with them on the quarter-deck appeared to regard the proposition seriously; but, pretending not to notice this, he laughingly answered:

"Agreed! You take the first watch, and I'll turn in, so as to be ready for mine. Something will surely come of it, before the sun sets again!"

No man is entirely free from superstition—not even in these hard, practical days; and the last sentence uttered by Lang, as he turned to go below, impressed his hearers wonderfully, notwithstanding the fact that it was mockingly oracular.

Something did come of it, however—according to the ideas of those who were present when the arrangement was made—for early next morning Lang himself sighted a large vessel about four miles to windward.

For a few minutes there was considerable excitement on board the Argus, and a great many "I told you so's" were exchanged; but, as they neared the stranger, it was seen that her foremast was gone, and that she was otherwise in a disabled state.

It was soon evident that she was a merchantman, though of what nationality was difficult to decide; but whatever it might be mattered little, for it was plain she was in distress, and that is sufficient with sailors to obtain assistance. Nation or country is lost sight of in the feeling of sympathy for the misfortunes liable to befall all who follow the fickle goddess upon the seas.

When the Argus was within a mile, the stranger threw out American colors, and hoisted a white, half-mast down.

"As I thought; she's in distress!" exclaimed Allen, and to the quartermaster:

"Keep her away, sir!"

When alongside the stranger, a boat was lowered and sent to ascertain what assistance

could be afforded. With the boat went Shubrick, and in a few minutes he sent it back for the surgeon, saying that several of the ship's crew, and a passenger, had been hurt—the latter dangerously—during the storm which had carried away the foremast, and half of the crew.

Canning and his assistant were immediately dispatched to the ship—which was the *Storm King*, of Boston—and then a second boat was lowered and filled with provisions, which Shubrick had also reported as short.

"I should like to go with that boat, sir," remarked Lang, when the second cutter was lowered.

"Then go—take charge of it!" returned Allen.

Had Lang been asked why he wished to visit the *Storm King*, he would have been unable to answer. He was not afflicted with that morbid curiosity which impels some people to visit scenes of suffering and horror, and yet he could not restrain a desire to board her.

A Turk would say it was *Kismet—Fate*. Perhaps it was. At all events, he entered the boat, and was quickly pulled on board the *Storm King*.

The injured men were all in the cabin, and having superintended the unloading of the boat, Lang took several bottles of wine, which were among the supplies, and went below with them.

"Here is some wine for the sick folks, doctor—" he began, on entering the cabin, but was interrupted by a joyous cry from the man over whom Canning was then bending.

"It's Master Geoff! I know his voice—let me see him!"

It was the passenger who had been reported as dangerously injured who uttered the words, and as the surgeon stepped aside he cried:

"Thank God! I have found you before I died! Master Geoffrey, you have succeeded to the title, and are now my lord!"

Crash! went the small basket containing the wine, and for a few seconds Lang looked like a man turned into stone.

"What is—the—matter, sir?" inquired the injured man, in a weak voice.

He was very old, had been terribly crushed by a falling spar, and could live but a few minutes.

"Lieutenant Dixon—wrote home that—that they were—were going to hang you, sir," he continued, but could get no further.

His evident desire to speak, and the struggle the old man made to do so, seemed to arouse Lang, upon whom all eyes were fixed; but, heedless of the wondering glances of the others, he stepped forward and bent over the dead man! The struggle to speak had suddenly ended the old man's earthly career!

Of course, only the people from the Argus understood the full significance of the scene just enacted, but even the others were astonished to hear that the young man attired as an American lieutenant was an English nobleman.

Satisfied that the old man was really dead, like a stag at bay Lang drew himself up proudly and gazed defiantly around him.

Shubrick and Canning looked both astonished and worried by what they had heard, while the latter's assistant looked maliciously knowing, and the coxswain of the first cutter, who had followed Lang, was gazing at the latter in open-mouthed amazement.

"Where is this man's baggage?" asked Lang.

"You knew him, sir?" questioned the mate of the *Storm King*, whom Lang had addressed.

"I did," was the reply, after a little hesitation. "I did, and I want to examine his baggage!"—the last peremptorily.

"It is here—this is all he had," hastily returned the mate, indicating a small valise lying on the floor beside the dead man.

"He came aboard just as we were going to sail, and had to leave the rest of his baggage behind," added the mate.

"It is locked!" impatiently exclaimed Lang, who was endeavoring to open the valise.

"See if you can find the key!" he continued, in the same peremptory tone.

The coxswain, standing next the dead man, began to search for the key, and in doing so drew forth a sealed packet addressed:

"LORD GEOFFREY GERARD."

Hastily snatching this, Lang made a movement as if going to break the seal, but changed his mind and thrust the packet into his breast-pocket. Then turning to Shubrick, he asked him to take charge of the dead man's valise (and the key of it, when found), and left the cabin.

CHAPTER XV.

LANG AND DOUBLEDICK DISAPPEAR.

IMMEDIATELY after leaving the cabin of the Storm King, Lang returned to the frigate United States, where, having briefly reported the condition of the former vessel, he inquired:

"Is it still your intention to return to New York to-day, sir?"

"As soon as we have done what we can for that vessel," replied Allen.

"Glad to hear it! I wish to meet the commodore as soon as possible."

The commander looked a little curious on hearing this; but made no comment, nor did Lang offer any explanation.

"He looks rather excited—more so than I've ever seen him before," thought Allen, as the other went below. "I wonder what happened to upset him?"

In a short time the first cutter returned to the frigate for the carpenter, and with it came Shubrick and Canning, and the latter's assistant. Then, Allen's curiosity was satisfied—more than satisfied, for he felt rather uneasy regarding the letter.

"Lord Geoffrey Gerard is bad enough," he observed, "but this sealed packet—Well, I hope it's all right, for Lang, or Gerard, or whatever his name is—I like him, and owe my life to him."

"So do I like him, and should hate to think him such an unmitigated liar, as this would seem to make him out," returned Shubrick.

"Not necessarily a liar at all. He may have abandoned his English connections, to cast his lot with us. His story—as much as he has told of it—suggests and supports that idea."

"What! Give up an English lordship, for the privilege of becoming a plain American citizen?"

"Just so! He is exactly the kind of a man who would do it. The Revolution furnished plenty of cases where, by casting their lot with the risky fortunes of the Americans, men were accounted to have committed financial and social suicide—in England."

The big lieutenant shook his head doubtfully, but said nothing against this, feeling that Allen was uttering what he hoped, rather than what he believed.

Having rigged a jury-mast, and made such repairs as were necessary and possible on the Storm King, the carpenter on the United States, and those assisting him, returned at noon to their vessel, and, then, like wildfire, the news flew through the frigate that Lang had been recognized as an English lord.

Except to the commander, Shubrick had not mentioned anything of the scene he had witnessed in the cabin of the Storm King, nor had Canning, and the latter's assistant, (for reasons of his own,) had also remained silent, but by the time the boatswain piped to dinner, every officer and seaman on board the frigate had heard a more or less exaggerated account of Lang's recognition by the dying passenger.

Being volunteers, Allen made a point of having Shubrick and Lang dine with him every day, while the other officers took turns in doing so—as is usual on board ships-of-war.

On this particular day, Doctor Canning and a newly appointed, and therefore the less cheeky, midshipman, were the officers who completed the commander's party.

Except that he was rather thoughtful, Lang's demeanor was unchanged by the events of the morning, and when, on his entering the cabin, Shubrick offered him the key of the dead passenger's valise, he smilingly declined it, saying:

"No—if you will guard that, and the bag, until I open it before Commodore Decatur, I shall esteem it a great favor."

"Oh, certainly!" returned Shubrick, as promptly as if he were not mentally asking:

"What the mischief does this mean?" Nothing further was said, or reference in any form made, to the subject of the dead passenger, or his recognition of Lang. What had passed was directly between Shubrick and Lang, and until the latter chose to speak, Allen would not refer to the matter.

As Lang did not mention, or even hint at, what had happened during the morning, the dinner was disposed of, and the party dispersed, without reference being made to the subject uppermost in the mind of each.

At the ward-room mess-table there was less reserve, and the subject was discussed, though rather guardedly, while at the midshipmen's mess, and in the forecastle, where reserve would

be looked upon as a species of insanity, and where no person or thing is free from the frankest kind of criticism, "Lord Geoffrey Gerard" was a most interesting subject of conversation.

After dinner, everything being in readiness, Allen sent word to the commander of the Storm King that, if desired, he would convoy that craft to New London—the nearest port where she could be properly repaired.

The offer was promptly accepted, and both vessels were quickly under way the fast-sailing frigate under working canvas only, in order that she might remain within reach of her crippled consort.

New London was made next morning, and here Lang left the United States, to go by land to New York.

"There is no telling what may happen to delay your arrival in New York, and it is of the greatest importance—at least, to me—that I should get there as soon as possible," he said to Allen, immediately after breakfast, while the vessels were still approaching New London.

"I received, as you have doubtless heard, a package from the passenger who died yesterday on the Storm King, and believe it to be of importance to myself, as well as to others," Lang explained, in response to the inquiring look called forth by his previous declaration.

"And you wish to go to New York in order to—"

"Open the package in the presence of Commodore Decatur, and to confer with him regarding its contents."

"If I was certain that the package contains what I believe it does," continued Lang, after a short pause, "there would not be any necessity of going to New York, but as I may be mistaken, I do not wish to open it until in the presence of the commodore."

Greatly pleased to find his faith in Lang's honest intentions thus confirmed—so he looked upon the latter's statement—Allen gladly consented to the proposed trip overland to New York.

"You are right!" he declared. "We may yet fall in with that British brig, or be delayed by adverse winds, and thus you would lose valuable time. I will send you ashore in the gig, as soon as we are off the port, and you can then engage a post-chaise, or a fast horse, to carry you the rest of the distance to New York."

"Thank you. I'll go and prepare for the journey," returned Lang, and calling Doubledick, who was on deck but off watch, went below.

The proposed arrangement was carried out—at least as far as Lang's going ashore was concerned—and when the cutter landed him, he directed the coxswain to await the return of Doubledick, who was to accompany him (carrying his valise) as far as the inn, where he expected to engage means of transportation to New York.

At the expiration of an hour, the coxswain grew impatient, and dispatched one of the boat's crew to hunt up Doubledick, but after a half-hour's search, the man returned without having been able to find any trace of the seafarer.

"He ain't in the inn where the coach stops, nor ain't been there," reported the searcher, adding:

"I looked for him in all the public houses, but neither him nor the lord was seen in any of them."

With this suspicious information the gig returned to the frigate, and, try as he might, Allen could not conceal his annoyance on receiving it.

The cutter was lowered, and a sergeant with a half-dozen marines sent to scour the town for Doubledick (for Allen would not admit, even to himself, that he felt any uneasiness regarding Lang, or that he would be glad to know that the latter had gone in the direction of New York), but the second search was as fruitless as the first.

"The two of them went straight up the main street, after landing, and right through the town—as far as anybody knows," reported the sergeant.

"How d'ye know that?" sharply demanded Allen.

"I—I don't know it, of course—"

"Then, be careful that you don't say it!" sternly ordered the commander; and angry and uneasy, he retired to his cabin, hoping Doubledick would yet turn up, but noon came and passed without any news from the missing man, and after dinner the order to get under way was reluctantly given.

Proceeding slowly, and keeping a sharp look-

out for the English brig, the Argus did not reach her anchorage alongside the United States until the morning of the third day after Lang had started overland for New York.

Decatur and Allen exchanged inquiring glances when they met on the quarter-deck of the frigate.

"Well, what d'ye think of him, now?" asked the former.

"Lang! He's a mystery in some respects, sir, or rather was, for I suppose he explained it all to you on arriving here!"

Allen spoke cheerfully, feeling no little relief on hearing the question, which indicated that the commodore was aware of what had occurred on board the Storm King, but was completely upset when Decatur, in response to the last remark, said:

"No; he has not explained it all to me, for the very good reason that he has not been here."

"Then, how did you learn—or, do you know that Lang started overland—"

"I know all about it," interrupted the commodore. "I know all about his being recognized by a dying passenger as Lord Geoffrey Gerard, but I do not know, nor can understand, why you allowed him to leave—especially with that package."

There was a tinge of censure in Decatur's tone, and Allen showed that he felt it, but feeling, too, that he was not altogether blameless, briefly explained the circumstances attending Lang's departure and Dick's disappearance.

"So! Master and man have disappeared, eh? Well, I must notify the authorities about the latter they are already after the former."

"Then, how did you learn of his leaving the ship at New London?" asked Allen, astonished to find his superior so well informed, under the circumstances.

"Through a letter sent me from New London by a sneaking cur, who thought to gain favor by notifying me of the fact, and of a conversation he had overheard some time ago between Canning and that man Doubledick. We want no eavesdroppers, Allen. Get rid of the fellow as soon as possible! He is Canning's assistant."

That was the surgeon's mate's reward, and to close with him, we may say that, within a week, the fellow was offering his services and knowledge of American naval affairs, to the commander of the English squadron!

CHAPTER XVI.

UNEXPECTED GUESTS.

In official circles, Lang's disappearance created considerable comment, as it did among the friends and relatives of the Ludlows, who had met the dashing privateersman.

"It's a great pity! He was a fine, gentlemanly young fellow, and I liked him very much," Mr. Ludlow declared, when Shubrick informed him of Lang's disappearance at New London.

"And an English lord, too!" he continued, when Shubrick (who was all but openly engaged to Miss Ludlow) had been forced to tell the whole story. "Well, it's lucky he was found out before Nettie and he became too much interested in each other!"

"Why, some people would consider him a 'catch' notwithstanding the war!"

"Well, we're not that kind of people!" promptly and emphatically declared the patriotic old gentleman.

"War or no war, we want none of 'em," he continued, speaking rather bitterly. "We've had one dose of nobility in this family, and I lost a sister by it—broken-hearted. Plain American citizens are good enough for the rest of us."

Shubrick made no comment. He had heard something of the story from Miss Ludlow, and while not blaming the old gentleman for the feeling he bore against foreign noblemen, was by no means certain that Lang's real character had been "found out in time."

He was confirmed in this suspicion when alone with Miss Ludlow later in the evening.

"Do you really believe Mr. Lang, or Lord Gerard, ran away, Jack?" she asked.

"It looks very much like it, especially as his man, Dick, disappeared at the same time. Still, he was a strange fellow, and may turn up trumps after all. I certainly hope so, for I've liked him from the beginning."

"You are a real good fellow, Jack!" declared Miss Ludlow, emphasizing the statement in a way which was certainly agreeable to "Jack," though it might have looked surprising to her friends and relatives.

"Poor Nettie feels terribly about him," she continued, "and is sure something—some accident has happened him."

"I'm afraid not."

"Wha-at!"

"Well"—desperately—"I'd rather some accident had happened him, than think him a liar and trickster! They're looking for him now—and the other fellow too."

"Who are?"

"Government agents."

"But they can do nothing to him—can they? He was acquitted by the court-martial, and you said yourself that he should have been rewarded."

"No, they can't do anything in particular," admitted Jack, "but, they can prevent him from doing anything, by watching his movements. It is true he was acquitted of being a spy, but something suspicious seems to be cropping up about him, all the time."

"And you—what do you think?"

"Well I don't know what to think. Allen's confidence in him, even yet, makes me feel more certain than I otherwise would, that he is all right, and will turn up again."

"That is some consolation for Nettie, at all events," commented Miss Ludlow, and straightway went off to comfort her young relative.

Matters continued in this shape, until the spring of 1813, when a confidential communication was received from the English Admiralty, stating that Lieutenant Geoffrey Gerard had sailed in the *Arethusa* on the special service he had mentioned, namely, the detection of the suspected English privateer in piratical acts, and further that the Government would be glad to reciprocate any favors shown that officer, at the same time pointing out that he had been engaged in an enterprise which should cause all civilized nations to respect him.

This dilatory communication, which came by a storm-beaten neutral, caused the sale of the beautiful lugger, and Sambo (which was the nickname given the mulatto, and the only name by which he was known, except its abbreviation, Sam), received a handsome sum of money.

Previous to the sale of the lugger, Sam had haunted the residence of the Ludlows for information of Lang, believing, apparently, that they would be the first to hear from the missing man, but on receiving his share of the prize-money, purchased a fishing-boat, and, with a youth whom he engaged to assist him, spent his time cruising along the coast, and in visiting such vessels as he came across.

Sam was a fine-looking, intelligent fellow, and before the arrival of the official confirmation of Lang's story had become well known, and liked, at the Ludlow residence—especially by the younger ladies. When the lugger was sold, and the fishing-boat bought, it was noticed that, although after every cruise, long or short, Sam invariably visited the Ludlow residence, he no longer inquired about Lang, but seemed anxious to see either of the younger ladies, instead.

This state of affairs continued until near the end of May, 1813, when, noticing the depressed spirits of her niece—and not altogether unsuspicious of the cause—Mrs. Ludlow gave a large party.

"It will revive dear Nettie's spirits," she explained, and, like a dutiful husband, that was sufficient for Mr. Ludlow—the pocketbook was produced and the invitations delivered.

The night of the party—Mrs. Ludlow would have called it a *soirée*, but Mr. Ludlow wouldn't have it—the Pine street house was crowded, every invitation, apparently, having been accepted, though that was hardly expected. Like all American crowds, the guests accepted the situation—that is, the discomforts of the crush—good-humoredly, and were, in fact, extracting a great deal of amusement out of it, when there came a series of announcements that astonished all, and delighted a few.

It ran something after this fashion:

"Captain Lawrence!"—exclamations of astonishment and pleasure.

"Lieutenant Shubrick!"—ditto, but more of pleasure, together with a cry of delight from the vicinity of Miss Ludlow.

"Lieutenant Ludlow!"—amazed silence.

With the announcement of the last uninvited guest, Jack Lang entered the spacious parlors of the family whose name he now, apparently, claimed as his own!

On the right of this man of many names walked the famous captain—the American Nelson—and on his left the equally famous (in his way) Fighting Jack Shubrick!

CHAPTER XVI.

A MARVELOUS TALE.

A low cry, partly surprise and partly joy, was the only sound that broke the amazed silence

which greeted the appearance of Jack Lang (as Lieutenant Ludlow), in the Ludlow parlors.

Mr. Ludlow, who had come forward at the first announcement, delighted to meet the famous captain, stood in the center of his wondering guests, gazing in amazement at the three officers for fully a minute.

Lawrence and Shubrick were smiling, but Lang (as we will continue to call him), looked rather grave and somewhat pale—as if from illness.

"Lieutenant-commander Allen!" came another unexpected announcement, just as Mr. Ludlow seemed to be about to speak, and with it entered the fourth uninvited guest.

Not too late for the *dénouement*, I hope!" exclaimed the last comer, as he entered.

Allen was well known to the Ludlows, as well as to most of the people present, and his words broke the spell which seemed to have fallen upon them.

"I do not understand you! What do you mean?" asked Mr. Ludlow, advancing toward the group of officers.

"Ah! I am then in time—and in time, too, to snatch the honors from my usually too quick-witted friends," returned Allen, grasping the situation and enjoying it to the fullest, continuing:

"Usually, these gentlemen (indicating Lawrence and Shubrick), are too quick for such slow fellows as myself, but this time it is the tortoise and the hare."

"Mr. Ludlow, I have the honor and the pleasure of introducing to you this gentleman, whom we have known as Jack Lang, more than suspected of being Lord Geoffrey Gerard, and who turns up, smiling and unconquered, as your own nephew—John Ludlow Lang!"

A shriek now startled the company, and those who turned quickly were in time to see Mrs. Ludlow fall fainting in the arms of her daughter.

This appeared to arouse her hitherto bewildered-looking husband, who, seeing that his wife was being cared for, advanced with outstretched hands toward Lang, exclaiming:

"You are her picture! No wonder I liked you!"

That settled the party. There was no need of informing the astonished guests that they were in the way, and in five minutes all had departed—except the naval officers. The latter remained—they formed part of the story which the hero of the occasion told as soon as the last guest had departed.

"As long as I can remember," he began, "my identity—my real name—my birthplace and parentage—has been, or was until quite recently, a mystery to me. Sometimes I was known as Jack Lang, again as Geoffrey Gerard.

"When two or three years of age, I was found on a waterlogged wreck of an American ship by the sailor Doubledick, himself the sole survivor of a boat's crew from a vessel which had foundered many days previous to his sighting the vessel I was in.

"Except a dog and myself, there was nothing alive on board the ship, but from her appearance, Dick was inclined to think that, had he been a few hours earlier he would have found one other, whom he judged to have been my nurse, alive. She was dead, however, and in her fingers was the pencil with which she had written on a scrap of paper 'Master Jack Lang.' This, which was pinned to my dress, and the fact that I was in the cabin, caused Dick to look upon me as being of some consequence, as it did the captain of an English man-o'-war, who took us, and the dog, off next day.

"This English captain seemed struck by my appearance, and with reason, for as it afterward turned out, I bore a wonderfully strong resemblance to his own son.

"A strange man, was Captain Gerard. He had just succeeded to a title, and was on his way home when I was found. On arriving in England, he was relieved from duty, and having placed me temporarily in some institution, he went home.

"Having married for money, and been disappointed in that, as well as in other respects, whatever love Captain Gerard had for his wife died soon after his marriage, while she, finding it was her fortune, and not herself, her husband was in love with, quickly lost all respect, as well as love for him; so, their life was not a happy one.

"I must pass over a great deal of the story of my early life—it would take too long to relate it, but the first quarrel after his succession to the title, brought me on the scene, as the instrument of Lord Gerard's revenge, for he allowed his wife to believe—in fact, caused her to believe—

that I was his son by a former secret alliance of some kind, and my extraordinary resemblance to her son, (who was a thorough Gerard in all the distinguishing features of the family,) assisted in this deception.

"As we grew older, the resemblance between young Geoffrey Gerard and myself increased rather than diminished, until it was almost impossible to distinguish one from the other, especially when I chose to alter my voice, which was much stronger than his, and the only observable difference between us. This pleased Lord Gerard greatly, because it won his wife.

"Although he had abandoned his profession, Captain Gerard had not resigned his commission on succeeding to the title, and as years rolled by rose by seniority to the rank of admiral.

"This gave him considerable influence, and when, at an early day, young Geoff and myself were appointed midshipmen, we were pushed along rapidly.

"At eighteen, both of us were made lieutenants—and then I obtained leave of absence, and a very extended one, too.

"We had been consulting, Geoff and I, and came to the conclusion that it was time to settle all doubts as to who and what I was, but it was easier said than done, for, when I returned home, the old lord laughed in my face, and informed me that I was whoever he might choose to make me.

"He was wrong there, however, for I had learned all that Doubledick knew, and was certain that I was either Jack Lang or Geoffrey Gerard—for it was often hinted that Lord Gerard had, during our childhood, substituted one for the other, by changing the clothing which we wore, during his wife's absence."

"When and how did you learn the truth?" asked Mr. Ludlow, impatiently.

"Only a few months ago, when, on boarding the *Storm King*, I met an old confidential servant of Lord Gerard's, who had a package addressed to Geoffrey Gerard. The package contained my mother's marriage-certificate and a transcript of the record of my birth, which Captain Gerard had found in a letter on the person of the dead nurse, addressed to you.

"My extraordinary resemblance to his own child, and a desire to revenge himself upon his unfortunate wife, caused him to suppress the papers until he was dying, and then, having heard of the death of Geoffrey (with whom I had secretly undertaken a desperate enterprise), he attempted to make amends for the injustice done me, by declaring I was the real heir, although the papers sent me proved I was not."

"And what happened to delay you, Ja—Mr. Ludlow? How was it you did not come here on going ashore at New London?"

Nettie commenced very timidly, blushing at the sound of her own voice, but, gathering courage as she proceeded, finished quite boldly—under the circumstances.

"That was one result of Lord Gerard's ill-judged attempt to substitute me for the real heir.

"On going ashore with Doubledick, I was accosted by a stranger, who declared he had something of importance to say to me, at the same time informing me that he had been a passenger by the *Storm King*. That was enough to secure my attention, and we walked through the town to an out-of-the-way inn, on the post road.

"Another stranger entered immediately afterward, and got into conversation with Dick, which is never a difficult task if you only furnish the rum.

"Meantime, I was listening to the first stranger, who informed me that he was an agent of the English Government, sent to look after me, and hinting that information had reached England that I was turning traitor to the country, inquired when I intended to return and assume the title, and if I wished any assistance.

"This caused me to lose my temper. I replied—very warmly, I fear—that I did not intend to return at all, but the fellow took my abuse so good-naturedly that I could not refuse his request to join him in a glass of wine—to drown his disappointment, as he said, but, as it turned out, to drug myself, for when I recovered my senses, I was on board an English man-o'-war, and there I remained until yesterday, when Dick discovered Sam hovering about the ship in a sail-boat, and last night we escaped."

"How did they treat you?" asked Mr. Ludlow.

"Kindly enough, but it was that sort of kindness extended to a harmless lunatic, or a willful child—it being generally considered that my

throwing away an English title, to become a plain American citizen, was sufficient proof that my brain was touched."

"'Tis a marvelous tale," commented the old gentleman, and glancing at his watch, continued:

"I suppose you are tired, and will be glad to rest like a Christian for one night?"

"Yes," assented Lang, smilingly, "though it must be for one night only."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Mr. Ludlow, amid a storm of ejaculatory protests from the ladies.

"I am going to Boston to-morrow night with Captain Lawrence," explained Lang, "and may have the pleasure of meeting my late keeper, Captain Broke, before returning."

"We will hope so at any rate," smilingly added the famous captain, as, with the others, he arose to take his leave, little thinking of the deathless fame that meeting would bring to him, though he perished in attaining it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"DON'T SURRENDER THE SHIP!"

JUNE 1ST, 1813.

Lying off Boston Harbor is the English man-of-war Shannon, commanded by Captain Broke, who has come there for the avowed purpose of seeking a combat with the Chesapeake. To bring this about, the English commander sent a formal challenge to Captain Lawrence.

The latter's transfer to the Chesapeake was peculiarly distasteful, because she was not only considered one of the very worst ships in the navy, but in consequence of her disgrace in the fight with the Leopard, bore the discouraging stigma among sailors of being an "unlucky ship."

Had Lawrence received the challenge, and thus been warned to prepare his ship—had he had an opportunity of selecting his officers and disciplining his crew—had he, in short, been able to place the Chesapeake on anything like equal terms with the Shannon, the combat that took place that day might have been more bloody, and an engagement seen such as never yet had been witnessed between single ships on the ocean, and although there is good reason to believe that Captain Broke studiously underrated the number of his guns and crew, or that he received additions to both, after his challenge, we cannot suffer ourselves to doubt the result.

But, Lawrence knew nothing of the challenge—all he saw was the Shannon riding before him in defiance, and although his ship was an inferior one—although his first lieutenant was sick on shore—although three of his lieutenants had recently left her, and of the remaining, two were only midshipmen, acting as lieutenants—although part of his crew were new hands, and all of them lacking in discipline through a long stay in port—yet, as he would have gone to sea had no enemy appeared, so the gallant captain felt himself bound not to delay because one was in sight.

As soon as the ship was under way, Captain Lawrence, having hoisted the famous flag with the motto: "Free Trade and Sailors' Rights!" made a short address to the crew; but, instead of the usual enthusiasm which greeted his words, there were signs of dissatisfaction and discontented mutterings regarding unpaid prize-money.

These were ill-omened signs at the eve of an action; but, kind-hearted as he was brave, and ignorant of the character of his crew, Captain Lawrence was unwilling to dampen their spirits at such a moment by harshness.

"Have prize-checks drawn and paid to these who have not received what is due them!" he ordered, and Lieutenant Lang (or Ludlow as he was now known—having adopted that name at the request of his uncle) transmitted the order to the purser.

While this scene was passing, the Shannon seeing the Chesapeake coming out bore away.

The Chesapeake followed her until four o'clock, when Lawrence, growing impatient, ordered:

"Fire a weather gun, Mr. Ludlow! We will see what he is made of."

The Shannon immediately hove to and awaited her pursuer, not firing a gun while the Chesapeake was coming head on to her—though it afforded a splendid opportunity for a raking broadside. But Captain Broke had too much admiration for his adversary to take advantage of this, and ordered:

"Don't fire until that gallant fellow's broadside is full on, so he can have an even chance!"

There was very little maneuvering, Lawrence's only thought being how he could soonest come to close quarters, and at about six o'clock the vessels being within pistol-range, they exchanged broadsides.

The result of the action thus commenced is well-known. Three broadsides only were exchanged, and eleven minutes after, the English had boarded and taken possession of the Chesapeake, every officer of which, down to the chaplain, had been killed or desperately wounded, and, having no one to lead or rally them, the seamen were soon overpowered—many of them following the example of the leader of the malcontents of the morning—a Portuguese boatswain's mate, who skulked below, saying:

"So much for not paying men their prize-money."

No signal of surrender had been made, for, as the heroic Lawrence was carried below (twice wounded by musket-balls), perceiving the melancholy condition of the Chesapeake, he uttered the famous order:

"Don't surrender the ship!"

The English were soon in possession, however and, perceiving that the noise above had ceased, the indomitable Lawrence ordered the surgeon to go on deck and tell the officers "to fight to the last, and never strike the colors!"

"They shall wave while I live!" he cried.

But, alas! there were no officers to tell, and the enemy was already in possession.

Four days after, surrounded by his wounded officers, the gallant Lawrence expired. His body, wrapped in the colors of the Chesapeake, was laid on the quarter-deck until they arrived at Halifax, where he was buried with the highest military and naval honors. Six of the oldest captains in the English navy—then at Halifax—carried the pall, which was one of the colors of the Chesapeake, and on top of the coffin was placed the dead hero's sword.

Following immediately behind the coffin, came the wounded officers of both ships (making the scene most impressive and affecting), and then followed a long procession, a regiment of troops and a full band playing the "Dead March in Saul."

Thus the British officers showed their admiration of the character of him who but yesterday was their enemy.

Lieutenant Ludlow, who had been twice wounded and twice carried below, only to return to the deck a third time when he saw his brother-officers brought down, was one of those who assisted Lawrence below, and although his conduct during the engagement had won for him unstinted praise, among both friends and enemies, Gallant Jack Lang was severely censured, and suspended by the Naval Department for leaving the deck while the fight was still going on!

This was a rude return for services which had gained for him the name of Gallant Jack, and, full of resentment, Lang resigned the commission he had received on the day following his escape from Captain Broke.

"It may be the law, but circumstances alter cases, and you've been unfairly dealt with! I shall appeal to Congress!" declared Mr. Ludlow, who was even more angry than his nephew.

"Oblige me by doing nothing of the kind. I would not accept reinstatement, even with a captain's commission pinned to it," quietly affirmed Jack.

"And what will you do?"

It was the evening following Lang's return to New York, and the whole family, together with Shubrick, were at the table.

Glancing slyly across the table at Nettie, Lang replied:

"First, with a little assistance from you, I propose to purchase the lugger, and turn her into an American privateer, and then after a cruise or two—"

He paused for a couple moments, with his eyes fixed on the fair girl opposite, causing the old gentleman to impatiently demand:

"And then what?"

"And then, sir, if moderately successful, I propose to marry Miss Trumbull!" coolly finished Lang, adding: "I now ask your consent to our engagement."

This caused something of a sensation, but before it had died away, Shubrick took his turn in firing a bombshell.

"I suppose I may as well put in my claim, now," he said, imitating his friend's cool, matter-of-fact style, and causing Miss Ludlow to become as blushingly confused as her cousin, while all eyes were turned on the speaker.

"What—another?" exclaimed Mr. Ludlow, in comical dismay—half-pretended, as it was, for

he was well aware of the feeling existing between the big lieutenant and his daughter.

"Yes; as engagements appear to be the order of the day, I must ask your consent to one between your daughter and myself."

"We'll discuss the engagement question, with the lugger question, after we've finished eating. Come! everything is getting cold!" replied Mr. Ludlow, after a minute's thoughtful silence.

That was the way it ended, however, for the father and uncle had not the slightest objection to either of the young men, and when Fighting Jack Shubrick returned to Decatur, and Gallant Jack Lang sailed away in the lugger, each had the satisfaction of knowing that "the girl he left behind him" was bound to him with the approval of her nearest relatives.

THE END.

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